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AT ODDS;

A Nobel.

By THE BARONESS TAUTPHOEUS,

AUTHOR OF 'THE INITIALS,' 'QUITS,' ETC.



IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY,
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1863.

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A T O D D S.

CHAPTER I.

THREE YEARS LATER.

AFTER the events related in the foregoing volume, Westenried became a disagreeable residence to all the Waldering family. The Director and his mother returned to Munich, Sigmund went to Paris, and Emmeran, when obliged to join his regiment, then quartered at Innsbruck, easily persuaded his aunt and cousins to accompany him there.

The peace of Presburg had given Tirol to Bavaria, and in its beautifully situated capital on the Inn not only Bavarian troops were stationed, but many Bavarian families had established themselves. Doris's mother, though possessed of some houses in what was then a suburb, but is now a part of the town of Innsbruck, was unwilling to inconvenience tenants who had occupied them for many years, and therefore took a suite of apart-

ments in a more central, and what was then considered a more desirable situation, which she furnished in the newest and most ponderous Egyptian style. Sphinxes, with profoundly serene faces, formed the sides of sofas, eagles' heads and necks the arms of chairs, gilt mummies supported marble consoles, serpents wound themselves through the intricate draperies of curtains, and alligators and pyramids strongly predominated in the ornaments strewed about the rooms. This description of furniture was at that time considered pure English from being an inspiration of the Prince Regent, and for some years successfully rivalled the meagre fashion of chairs and tables commonly called '*Style de l'Empire*.'

In these apartments Tiroleans and Bavarians met as on neutral ground, and all allusion to the war raging in other parts of Europe was avoided if in any way calculated to lead to unpleasant political discussions. But the misfortunes of Prussia, the millions exacted by Napoleon after the battle of Jena, and the unreasonable contributions levied in Hamburg and Lubeck, were spoken of freely enough, as well as the losses of the Russians and the frightful sacrifice of human life caused by the insatiable French conqueror.

When Napoleon prohibited any kind of com-

merce and communication with Great Britain, and even decreed that every British subject found in the countries occupied by his troops or those of his allies should be made prisoners of war, Doris took counsel of her numerous Bavarian and Tirolean friends, and received from them the most satisfactory assurances of protection, coupled, however, with the advice to change her name for a German one as soon as possible, in order to be prepared for all emergencies.

There was much laughing and jesting on this subject, unmixed with any apprehension of approaching danger. If people surmised or suspected that the defeat of the French in Spain and Portugal might encourage Austria to make another effort to relieve herself and Europe from the tyranny of France, it was generally supposed that Tirol was not likely to become the seat of war, as, even for the passage of troops the country was singularly ill-adapted, and military men declared that it would be difficult to find a plain of sufficient dimensions in any of the valleys to serve either as a field of battle or for the encampment of a regular army.

Under these circumstances, it was by no means surprising that the officers of the Bavarian regiments at that time in Innsbruck should endeavour to make the time pass as pleasantly as

possible, and that the carnival of the year 1809 was as gay as can well be imagined in a provincial town.

Private masquerades were of frequent recurrence, for the Bavarians were, and are to this day partial to such entertainments; and the Walderings and some others gave general invitations to their acquaintances to assemble on stated evenings in their apartments, adding a request that the guests would appear masked, costumed, or in domino.

These assemblies amused Doris and Hilda extremely, and guesses concerning the identity of the masks promoted conversation long after such guests had left them.

‘I wish,’ said Hilda, one night when Emmeran was taking leave in his usual reluctant manner, although he had passed the whole evening with them; ‘I wish you could find out who wore the Roman costume this evening, and looked so picturesque and dignified; his silence and evident wish to avoid you makes me suppose him one of the officers of your regiment.’

‘That is not very likely,’ answered Emmeran; ‘as there was certainly nothing in his appearance at all familiar to me.’

‘Of course not, in such a dress, and with a half-mask and false beard; but,’ she continued, ‘sup-

pose the same figure in your uniform, and try to recollect if any one of your officers has a head shaped like his, or such hands and feet.'

'There are a good many of his height among us,' said Emmeran, thoughtfully; 'but not any of them could stand as he did. I could almost suspect him to be——'

'What?'

'An actor—a tragedian, or something of that sort.'

'So,' exclaimed Hilda, 'a man must be an actor if he can stand and walk gracefully in a toga!'

'Well,' he replied, 'I should say it required some practice or study; at least, I know I could not do it.'

Hilda laughed. 'Oh, Emmeran, if you only would *try*,' she said, eagerly; 'do pray get a toga, and come here on Thursday as a Roman. Doris and I will put you into all the attitudes.'

'And at the same time laugh at my awkwardness?' he rejoined.

'If you choose to make us laugh, you can do so undoubtedly,' she said; 'but I do not see why you cannot manage a toga, and lean your elbow on the stove just as well as any one else.'

'If Doris and my aunt also think it would be amusing to see me in such a dress,' he observed,

‘I can go to the people who hire out masks, and perhaps get the very same costume you saw this evening.’

Doris said she did not think there was anything particularly entertaining in a Roman mask; she was sure the person who wore it that evening had only wished to show his figure to advantage.

‘And, perhaps,’ said Emmeran, ‘you also think that as I have not at all a graceful figure, I had better avoid the tunic and toga?’

‘Not if you like to wear them, Emmeran. I dare say there were more Romans with figures like yours than such as we saw to-night; had we been in a circus, I should have expected to see him throw aside his well-draped toga and spring on the back of the first galloping horse within his reach.’

‘Well, Hilda, what do you say to that?’ asked Emmeran.

‘Nothing. I only hope you will appear here on Thursday evening as representative of what the Romans really were, or’—she added with an arch smile—‘or what Doris supposes them to have been!’

‘The colour of my hair would be more appropriate for a Goth,’ said Emmeran, smiling; ‘and this fellow’s black head was a perfect “Titus.”’

‘Perhaps it was a wig,’ suggested Doris.

‘Then,’ said Hilda, amused, ‘you had better get one like it, with beard to match.’

‘Why not?’ said Doris; ‘the Romans painted and dyed their hair, and I believe in later times wore wigs also.’

‘Very true,’ said Emmeran; ‘and as light-coloured hair was admired at Rome, I might wear my own if I can procure a beard of the same colour. At all events, while inquiring about the toga, I can try to find out who wore it this evening.’

‘Pray do,’ said Hilda, ‘and then we shall see who made the best guess. I suppose him an officer; you think him a tragedian. Doris says he resembles, or might be, a circus rider; and mama, dear, what did he appear to you?’

‘A coxcomb!’ answered her mother; and while Hilda laughed and Doris smiled Emmeran buckled on his sword and slowly left the room.

During the course of the next two days the silent Roman mask became the subject of conversation in many families, and induced an unusual number of people, both masked and unmasked, to appear at the Walderings’ on the following Thursday. Great was the satisfaction of the assembled company to find the toga-ed figure standing, carefully draped, on the spot described; while Hilda

and Doris were not a little amused to see many walk up and stare and discuss the posture and dress, as if Emmeran had been placed there for exhibition.

‘So,’ observed an old lady, adjusting her spectacles and gazing upwards, ‘so this is the Emperor Titus.’

The figure shook its head slowly.

‘Therese, did you not tell me it was Titus?’

‘No, grandmama; I said that a head with short curled hair is the newest fashion, and is called a “Titus.”’

‘Then what was that story your brother told us of the Emperor who so often said that he had lost a day?’

‘My friends,’ said Emmeran solemnly, ‘I have lost many a day.’

‘I thought this mask wouldn’t speak,’ cried a young man advancing; ‘make him talk and we shall soon discover who he is!’

‘The voice is feigned,’ said one.

‘The hair is false,’ said another.

‘No, the hair is his own, and only the nose and forehead are masked,’ observed a third.

At this moment a pilgrim, with a long white beard, advanced slowly into the middle of the room, affecting great age, and leaning heavily on his staff, but the moment his eyes fell on Emmeran

he stood upright, strode a few steps forward, and then, as if suddenly remembering his assumed character, bent down his head and tottered on to the nearest chair.

Doris, Hilda, and their mother had been expecting the arrival of this mask, as, though Emmeran had not been able to ascertain the name of the person who had worn the toga on the former evening, he had heard that a pilgrim's dress had been ordered for a future occasion, and there was every probability of his appearing in it at their house.

And now this pilgrim sat, leaning on his staff, slightly bent forward, his eyes peering eagerly through the mask, but, as Doris soon discovered, almost exclusively watching her and her family. Who could he be? There was only one person who might wish to enter their house masked, in order to see them without the necessity of making himself known; and as the thought of Frank flashed through her mind, she recalled the figure not only of the Roman mask, but also of an Armenian—a blue domino—and a Greek, who had all more or less excited their curiosity, in different places, during the last week or two, and deliberated whether or not he were likely to recommence his intercourse with them in this eccentric manner.

Meantime Emmeran grew heartily tired of the dignified posture in which he had been placed by

his cousins, and perceiving they had ceased to watch him, he flung his toga, in a more military than graceful manner, over his shoulder, and sauntered into the adjoining room, where he found Doris surrounded by a number of clamorous guests entreating her to play some Irish airs on the harp.

‘Ask my sister,’ was her answer; ‘Hilda plays them quite as well as I do, and far more willingly.’

‘I suppose,’ said Emmeran, as the others returned to the larger room in search of Hilda, ‘I suppose these national melodies remind you too forcibly of Ireland and——Frank.’

‘They make me melancholy, for some reason or other,’ she answered, ‘though I really do not think that Frank has much to do with it. His quarrel, by letter, with my mother, was most unfortunate, as it has completely estranged him, and so long prevented his making any effort to be reconciled to Hilda; nevertheless, when you told us that this pilgrim mask was supposed to be a stranger, and mentioned his extreme anxiety to conceal his name, I could not help thinking of Frank, who alone might venture to come here uninvited and unrepresented; and the very possibility of his being in that pilgrim’s dress would have made playing the harp just now a very painful effort to me.’

'I am sorry to hear it,' said Emmeran, 'for I hoped you could meet him with perfect equanimity.'

'You mistake me,' said Doris, slightly colouring, 'it is only the mystery that disconcerts me ; for if the pilgrim were to walk in here, take off his beard, and really prove to be Frank, I think—indeed I am sure—I could play as long as he or any one chose to listen. How fortunate that Hilda has no suspicion !' she added, as a light hand passed over the strings of the harp, and lingered on some of the upper ones that required tuning.

She was right. Hilda had no suspicion. She thought it so natural that a mask should make a mystery of his name, at least until the carnival was over, that she did not even recollect the pilgrim's presence, still less perceive his movement, as the request was made to her, or his start as she prepared to comply with it. But Doris and Emmeran were more observant ; they knew how great Frank's surprise would be to find that Hilda had acquired an accomplishment, which not only his love of music but also national feelings made him value highly. They knew also her secret intention of surprising him, when an opportunity should offer, and now she was about to do so with an unconsciousness of his presence that was most advantageous to her ; for even Hilda's courage

might have failed had she been aware, or even thought it possible, that the pilgrim who now stood masked before her was Frank !

Never, however, did she play with more self-possession and feeling, never more willingly, than just then ; and the long-robed pilgrim, forgetful of his staff and venerable beard, stood gazing at the charming performer with folded arms and head erect, a foot, on which a spur could easily be imagined, unconsciously marking the time, while an occasional movement of the head and figure proved the irresistible impression made on him by the music.

When Hilda ceased, stood up, and pushed the harp aside, he drew back, joined a group of dominos near the door, and with them soon after left the room.

In order to preserve his incognito, Emmeran thought it necessary that evening to retire with the other guests, so that Hilda, Doris, and their mother were alone when about to separate for the night.

‘ After all,’ observed Hilda, ‘ Emmeran looked better than I expected, he is neither an Apollo nor a Hercules ; but I dare say Doris was right in supposing that more Romans may have resembled him than the man who was here on Monday. What a difference dress makes ! I

should never have noticed the pilgrim of to-night had not Emmeran told us he was the Roman mask of Monday.'

'I suspect he is more than that,' said Doris. 'Do you remember the Armenian, the blue domino, and the Greek who was at Madame d'Epplen's, and seemed to watch and follow us wherever we went?'

'Perfectly,' said Hilda; 'and on consideration the Greek and Roman have a strong resemblance in hair and figure. As he was so often at the Epplens', perhaps he is some Bavarian who has brought her a letter from her husband; he may even be an officer in Colonel d'Epplen's regiment, and she can in that case tell us all about him.'

'Let us defer the discussion of this not very important subject until to-morrow,' interposed their mother, with difficulty suppressing a yawn; 'I confess I am more sleepy than inquisitive just now.'

'Suppose, however, dear mother,' said Doris, 'that I had some reason for thinking it possible that the Armenian, the Greek, the Roman, and to-night's pilgrim were one person, and that person——Frank?'

Her mother stopped, turned round, and repeated the word 'Frank!'

Hilda leaned on the chair nearest her, and listened attentively to all her sister's reasons for the supposition.

'You may be right or not, Doris,' she said, in a low voice; 'I only know that I am thankful you did not tell me your suspicions while he was here.'

'This is worth investigating,' said their mother, 'and if Frank really be here we can send Emmerran to him, and—.'

'No, dear mother,' cried Hilda, eagerly interrupting her; 'I have long forgiven Frank all he said to me, and wrote to you, but I can never consent to the slightest advance being again made to him.'

'Remember, Hilda, the opportunities are few;—this is the first that has occurred since your marriage, that is, during the space of nearly four years.'

'True,' said Hilda, 'I have been forgotten, or worse than forgotten, all this time; but, were it twice as long, I would not seek a reconciliation.'

'Have you any objection,' asked her mother, 'to my proposing a meeting and explanation with him?'

'None whatever as far as your personal quarrel is concerned, but I do not wish my name to be mentioned.'

‘It will be impossible to avoid naming you, Hilda, for our quarrel, you know, was altogether about you, and my wish for a reconciliation wholly on your account.’

‘Then, mama, I must entreat you earnestly to let the matter rest. Believe me, if you make advances to Frank, he will only accept them as far as you and Doris are concerned, and you will subject me to an additional mortification that when it is too late you will wish you had spared me!’

‘What ought we to do?’ asked her mother, turning to Doris, who stood musing near the candle she had just lighted.

‘Nothing,’ she answered, quietly. ‘Frank has come to our house masked, and taken such precautions to remain unknown that I think we had better respect his incognito and not even make inquiries about him.’

‘Quite right,’ said Hilda. ‘If any one understands Frank thoroughly, it is Doris;’ and she walked towards her room humming one of the Irish melodies she had played on the harp an hour previously.

‘Doris, I don’t at all like your advice on this occasion,’ observed her mother, as soon as they were alone. ‘If we do not make some effort to bring Frank and Hilda together, they may live on in this way for years.’

‘And if they meet they may quarrel,’ replied Doris.

‘Not likely,’ said her mother, ‘for Hilda is even more attractive than she was at Ulm, and Frank will soon discover that a few years have given her too much knowledge of the world to quarrel with him as she did there.’

‘There are so many ways of quarrelling,’ suggested Doris.

‘But,’ continued her mother, ‘I believe we may take it for granted that she is as much attached to him as ever?’

‘Of that I have little doubt,’ answered Doris; ‘but from some remarks she made about Frank I suspect she has taken offence at the accounts which our injudicious friends have given her of his gay life both at Vienna and Prague. She looked so much more thoughtful than pleased when we were speaking of him just now that I almost doubt her wishing either an explanation or meeting just at present.’

‘That,’ observed her mother, ‘may be in consequence of their having parted in anger; but the embarrassment which they both must feel can only be removed by the good offices of friends and relations, and I shall therefore send Emmeran to Frank to-morrow.’

CHAPTER II.

HOW THEY MET.

‘I HOPE, Hilda,’ said her mother late on the afternoon of the succeeding day, ‘I hope you will be glad to hear that Frank is coming to us this evening?’

‘Certainly not, mama, if you have requested the pleasure of his company.’

‘I sent Emmeran to him,’ she answered in explanation, ‘and he found Frank as willing to come to us as we are to receive him. Doris’s supposition that he was the Armenian and the Greek mask we met at the Epplens’ was perfectly correct.’

‘And——a——in what character does he appear to-night?’

‘This is not our evening for receiving masks, Hilda, and I do not intend to go to the Epplens.’

‘Nevertheless I must repeat my question, mama, and again ask in what character does Frank come to us this evening?’

‘He comes as my nephew——’ began her mother.

‘Of course,’ said Hilda, ‘your nephew, and Doris’s cousin, and my cousin too because he cannot help himself, but——but——’

‘Hilda,’ said her mother, ‘you must be satisfied for the present with knowing that he is willing to forgive and forget, and he hopes we shall do the same.’

‘Forgiving is easy, my dear mother, when there are faults on both sides. As I ought not to have consented to a marriage that I knew to be so much against his inclinations, so he, having consented, should not afterwards have treated me so unkindly. This, however, I can forgive, but I cannot and will not forget his assurance that he would make no pretension to authority, and that our union was merely nominal. I shall therefore be glad to see my cousin Frank this evening, but need not remain at home for the purpose. I dare say he will still be here when I return from the Epplens’.

It was perhaps to prevent expostulation that Hilda left the room, while her mother, turning to Doris, exclaimed in a tone of vexation: ‘I am sorry to perceive you were right,—my interference has been injudicious, and I now fear I shall bring them together only to give them an opportunity of quarrelling afresh. Perhaps we had better send Emmeran again to Frank.’

‘For what purpose?’ asked Doris; ‘he cannot unsay your message, or even tell him we do not wish to see him.’

‘But, my dear girl, consider the consequences should Frank come here fully expecting a joyful reception from Hilda, and taking it for granted that she is willing to agree to any plan for the future he may think proper to propose!’

‘He can scarcely entertain such expectations,’ said Doris, ‘however great his hopes of ultimate reconciliation may be. I always, however, thought it would be better to let him find out his errors and correct them himself. Your well-meant interference after we left Ulm, dear mama, only made matters worse; and now that he feels a little natural curiosity, if not something better, to know how we are living here, believe me, instead of sending Emmeran to tell him that we had found him out in spite of all his disguises and should be delighted to see him again, it would have been wiser to have waited until he made himself known to us, and asked, if after such prolonged neglect we, or rather Hilda, would consent to see him.’

‘You may be right, Doris, but something must be done, for Hilda is in a fair way to forget him altogether.’

‘That I doubt,’ said Doris.

‘She never speaks of him,’ continued her mother.

‘Neither should I under such circumstances,’ replied Doris.

‘And I fear,’ added her mother, ‘that she is even beginning to like the attentions of others.’

‘There is safety in the multitude of her admirers,’ rejoined Doris, ‘and if I know Frank at all the admiration of others will only serve to increase his. Have you not said yourself that men not unfrequently value their wives as Jews and Turks do their jewels, in exact proportion to their worth in the eyes of the world? and some one else said he had known men who only cared for their wives when they were well dressed! Now Hilda is much admired and always well-dressed—Frank has been sent for—they are to meet to-night with all the advantages of increased experience; let us leave them to judge and act for themselves in future.

* * * * *

Frank came, and if unpleasantly surprised at Hilda’s absence, he betrayed it not. The information that she was at the Epplens’ seemed perfectly to satisfy him, and he talked for a long time in the most unreserved manner without even referring to her. Emmeran’s presence was a great restraint; he had come with Frank and seated himself in his usual place, in perfect unconsciousness of being in the way, until he perceived his

aunt retire to another part of the room, where calling Frank to her side, she began a low, eager conversation that immediately attracted Doris's attention in a very remarkable manner. 'I believe I had better go away,' he then whispered with a glance towards the speakers,—but as he rose, Frank looked at his watch, stood up also, and was taking leave with a promise to come the next day, when the door opened, and Hilda, brilliant in the light, white, gold-bordered drapery of a Priestess of the Sun entered the room. Her face was covered with the silk mask that (representing the features of a youthful Peruvian) had secured her freedom of speech during the evening, and without removing it she first extended her hand to Frank, and then assured her mother and sister that the soirée at the Epplens' had been unusually gay. 'Almost every one was masked,' she added; 'even little Babette had a costume à la *Tirolienne*, and would not betray any of the people she knew though Colonel Dietfurt offered her immense bribes in the form of French bonbons.'

'So Dietfurt was there!' observed Frank.

'Yes,' she replied, sitting down and beginning to untie her mask with apparent composure; 'he is everywhere and uncommonly popular.'

'And,' continued Frank, 'does he still proclaim his intention of raising the Tirolean conscripts

and pacificating the country with only his own regiment and a few squadrons of cavalry?’

‘We are beginning to hope,’ she answered, ‘that no coercive measures will be necessary—that the inhabitants of Tirol will remember that they are now Bavarians, and that they cannot expect to be exempted from the military conscription which has now become the law of the whole land.’

‘I am surprised,’ said Frank, a little ironically, ‘to hear you speak at all of *Tirol*; I thought, as a Bavarian, you would tell me I was in the “Inn circle.”’

‘Well, so you are,’ she answered, taking her mask from her face, and looking at him with an arch smile; ‘and we hope you will like our “circle” so well that you may be induced to remain in it for some time.’

Frank smiled, put down his hat, and leaned on the back of the nearest chair.

‘I must now tell you all about the masks,’ she continued, turning to the others. ‘What excited most interest was a group dressed as Tirolean peasants; and among them, Doris, there was a representative of that picturesque-looking man with the wonderfully long black beard we saw so often in the streets lately. I almost think it must have been the man himself.’

‘My dear Hilda,’ cried her mother, ‘how can you imagine a peasant as guest in the drawing-room of Madame d’Epplen!’

‘One seldom sees such interesting figures in a drawing-room,’ replied Hilda, laughing; ‘even the bearded mask resembling him created quite a sensation.’

‘Perhaps,’ suggested Emmeran, glancing towards Frank, ‘perhaps this man is sufficiently interesting to make you wish me to procure the dress and appear in it here to-morrow evening?’

‘You could not wear it, Emmeran,’ she replied; ‘for this man’s shoulders are twice as broad as yours. The costume is that of a peasant of the valley of Passeyer, where he is innkeeper, freeholder, and horse-dealer. His inn is called “The Sands,” perhaps because the river Passeyer made incursions and deposited sand on his land. They say it is rather an insignificant place; but I shall certainly visit him there when we go to Meran next autumn, as we could easily ride or walk to “The Sands,” if we remained the night there.’

‘This man’s beard is procuring him celebrity observed Frank, unconsciously raising his hand to the long moustache he had carefully cultivated since his change of regiment. ‘Now,’ he added, ‘if I were at liberty to let my beard grow, I

should perhaps have a better chance of becoming remarkable than in any other way ; it would soon cover half my face, and might induce people to talk about me.'

'They do talk about you,' said Hilda, colouring, 'quite as much as you could desire. Old General Kinkel and everybody know who you are, and what you are, and why you came here.'

'All that was in my passport,' said Frank, with a smile that seemed inclined to turn into a laugh ; 'besides which I was subjected to the cross-questioning of the military authorities here, who elicited more than I wished or intended to tell, if I could have helped myself.'

'Was it necessary to be so very explicit ?' asked Hilda.

'I should have been sent back to Vienna, if I had not,' he answered. 'You see, Hilda, your friend Napoleon is still my enemy ; he is displeased with some of the military movements in Austria, fears another effort for freedom, and General Kinkel has received private information that *all* Austrian officers now coming to Tirol are emissaries of the Archduke John ! My loquaciousness alone procured me permission to remain in Innsbruck ; but I am well watched, and have the certainty that all my letters will be opened and carefully inspected.'

‘The Bavarians never open letters,’ cried Hilda; ‘do they, Emmeran?’

‘I have nothing to do with letters,’ he answered; ‘but, as Austria is certainly preparing for war, and emissaries from the Archduke have undoubtedly been here, the less Frank writes about military matters, or the state of public feeling in Tirol, the better. But, now, tell us something more about this landlord of “The Sands,” whose name I know is Andrew Hofer.’

‘So you have heard of him, too?’

‘Of course; he is a great man in his valley, was one of the deputies sent to the Archduke John after the peace of Presburg, and is supposed, like all the Tirolean innkeepers, to be an incorrigible Austrian.’

‘That is,’ said Doris, ‘he is a patriot in the best sense of the word.’

‘It is natural that you should think so,’ said Emmeran; ‘but it is pretty generally understood that the innkeepers are dissatisfied about the duty on wine; it is also well known that at the target-shooting matches last summer all sorts of opposition to our government was planned, and that these landlords have not only concealed, but aided the flight of our conscripts on several occasions.’

‘They were quite right,’ said Doris: ‘why

should they assist in delivering up their countrymen to be formed into regiments for Napoleon's use? Have you not told me yourself that he has required 30,000 men from Bavaria, and not left you enough to defend Tirol for a week in case of a war?'

'Yes, Doris, I said so, but—you need not have repeated it before Frank.'

'No, indeed,' said Frank, laughing; 'for I am as well aware of it as you or any officer of the garrison of Innsbruck. Come, Emmeran, we need not play at enemies here; I can assure you that any information you could give me I knew before I entered your "circle," such as the number of men here, at Halle, and elsewhere—that some of the burghers of Innsbruck are not unfavourable to Bavaria, but that the peasants are supposed to be loyal—that is, Austrian—with heart and soul. I should be glad to find out that they would give their bodies also in case of a war—and this hiding and flight of the conscripts looks rather like it.'

'I don't know that,' said Emmeran; 'the Tiroleans will take up arms to defend their country, if necessary; but they hate the uniform and discipline of a regiment, and you know it has hitherto been one of their privileges never to be employed out of their own land.'

‘That was the Austrian law,’ said Frank, ‘and they seem not to have forgotten it. Now, if that fellow with the beard were here, I daresay he could tell us all about it.’

‘No doubt of that,’ said Emmeran; ‘we don’t quite like his mysterious journeys in all directions, on pretence of buying and selling horses: people even say he has been in Vienna lately—perhaps you saw him there?’

‘And if I did,’ said Frank, smiling, ‘you don’t suppose, after what you have just said, that I should tell you so?’

‘I wish I knew him,’ interposed Doris, ‘for I should like to advise him to shave off his beard; it will be sure, in times like these, to bring him into trouble by making him a marked man.’

‘He would not shave off that beard for you nor for any one,’ said Hilda; ‘they say that a wager with some friends was the cause of his allowing it to grow. It happened that one evening a beggar, with a similar beard, came up to them, when they were sitting drinking wine together before the house on the Sands; and, as Andrew Hofer had not been long married, these friends asked him what his wife would say if he took it into his head to let his beard grow to such a length? He replied that she had no right to prevent him, and that he could let his beard grow in any way he

chose. They laughed, jested, and finally betted a yoke of oxen that he dared not remain a year without shaving: he gained the wager, and has preserved his beard ever since!’

‘He is right,’ said Frank; ‘it saves time, a vast deal of trouble, and soap; and I can only say that, if his patriotism equal his beard, I shall be happy to make his acquaintance. And now,’ he added, turning to his aunt, ‘I believe that I ought to say good-night, but I shall accept your invitation to take up my quarters in your house to-morrow, for you have fully convinced me that it is absolutely necessary to do so, if only for appearance’ sake, and to prevent people from talking about what does not concern them. Good-night!’

‘Halt, Frank! we can go together,’ cried Emmeran.

But Frank had no inclination to wait until Emmeran had buckled on his sword and made arrangements for a walk to Wiltau on the following day. Before a convenient hour for the latter had been decided upon, Frank had descended the staircase, and was already in the street making long strides towards his hotel.

As he passed the sentinel posted at General Kinkel’s house, he perceived the man leaning on his musket and looking after a couple of peasants

who were walking with a Capuchin monk at the other side of the street, and conversing in the low, undemonstrative manner peculiar to the Tiroleans. The sentinel followed the three receding figures with a vacant stare, little supposing that they were men of whom he would soon hear much and often ; men whose names would become of note in the history of their country, and over whose graves monuments would be erected, before which not only Tiroleans, but even foreigners, would stand and speak of them and their deeds with enthusiasm. Frank could not know this either, just then, but he recognized in the broad-shouldered peasant Andrew Hofer, the innkeeper of the Sands, and, while looking at him, scarcely observed the muscular figure and intelligent face of Joseph Speckbacher, or the red-bearded monk Joachim Haspinger, whose brilliant eloquence and personal courage made his subsequent fame little inferior to that of his companions.*

Frank walked quickly on, but stopped under a lantern that hung suspended by a chain across

* Hofer's remains were brought from Italy, and interred in the Hof-church at Innsbruck. Speckbacher has been given a place beside him, and his funeral was celebrated with great pomp in the year 1858. Haspinger, with all his wonted energy, accompanied the Tirolean Chasseurs to Italy as Field Chaplain in the year 1848, and died of old age a few years since at Salzburg.

the street, drew out his watch, and, while winding it up, said, in a low, distinct voice, as they passed him: 'Andrew Hofer, either shave off your beard or return to the Sands; you have attracted attention and are watched.'

And the three men moved on as if they had not heard, or that the information in no way concerned them.

Frank was still standing under the lantern, when he was overtaken by Emmeran.

'You might as well have waited for me, Frank; and regulated your watch where you had light to see what you were about.'

'No, Emmeran, I could not stand it any longer. The self-possession of that Priestess of the Sun quite overpowered me.'

'And astonished me not a little,' said Emmeran; 'but you must allow the mask was very well chosen, and a proof of Hilda's complete acquiescence in your wishes.'

'Hang me if I have an idea what you mean, or what she meant either,' said Frank, impatiently.

'You know,' observed Emmeran, 'that a Priestess of the Sun is supposed to have made a vow to live unloved, and, if possible, unloving, until her thirtieth year, at the end of which time she is free, or, rather, expected to marry and become a useful member of society.'

‘Nonsense,’ cried Frank, half laughing; ‘say, rather, that this dress showed her beautiful figure to advantage, and you will be nearer the mark.’

‘That may have influenced her, too,’ said Emmeran; ‘for the white gauze draperies and the spangled veil, and even the gilt suns on her head and girdle, were singularly becoming!’

‘Well,’ said Frank, ‘I thought her—all she wished to appear and a coquette into the bargain; but I suspect she was affecting a nonchalance she could not have felt, for I am quite sure I saw her hands tremble when she untied her mask.’

‘How could it be otherwise?’ said Emmeran; ‘remember the manner in which you parted, and her odd position in consequence of your eccentric stipulations.’

‘My aunt need not have told her of them,’ said Frank.

‘I understood,’ replied Emmeran, ‘that Hilda had heard from you yourself that her marriage was merely nominal. Doris gave hopes of your coming to your senses and settling down quietly in ten years or so; but my aunt seemed to think that a meeting would set all to rights, and hoped you would not think of postponing your reconciliation with Hilda so long, or even until the war was over. And she was right; for it is hard to

say when that will be, as it seems never to cease now-a-days, and may break out here before long. Is this the case?’

‘I shouldn’t wonder if it were,’ answered Frank; ‘the present state of affairs is not likely to last.’

‘I suppose,’ continued Emmeran, ‘I must not press this subject; but I hope a time will come when we can speak to each other as unreservedly as we used to do at Westenried.’

‘The time will come, and soon,’ replied Frank, as they stood before the door of the hotel; ‘but while waiting for it you need not look at me so reproachfully just as if you thought me an emissary of the Archduke’s or a——spy!’

‘Frank!’

‘Now, don’t try to appear as if you had not entertained some such suspicion. Can you not believe that I asked and obtained leave of absence for the sole purpose of seeing my aunt, Doris, and Hilda?’

‘Nothing could be more natural, at all events,’ said Emmeran.

‘As to the state of public feeling in Tirol,’ continued Frank, ‘it is as well, or, rather, far better understood in Vienna than here. I have had, therefore, nothing of importance to ascertain, nothing to discover, and no new acquaintances to

make. That I have chiefly associated with people already known to me and who are staunch Austrians is not surprising, as I can speak to them of hopes that would be offensive to you, and, in fact, I should never have entered a Bavarian house here if it had not been to see those nearest and dearest to me without restraint.'

'I am very glad you are not here officially,' observed Emmeran.

'So am I,' rejoined Frank; 'and if it be any satisfaction, or even a relief to your mind, I can give you the assurance that were I able to send a letter to Pallersberg with the certainty of its reaching him unopened, it would contain no information beyond the assertion that I have found everything precisely as we were led to expect.'

'Are you, indeed, so very well informed?' asked Emmeran.

'So well,' answered Frank, turning back for a moment as he was about to enter the hotel, 'so well, that I cannot submit to be questioned by any one. I ask for no information from you, and you must expect none from me. Let us talk of my aunt and Doris and Hilda,—the Director, or even your grandmother; but not a word of politics or the discontent of the people here, the movements of our armies, or——Napoleon Bonaparte!'

CHAPTER III.

WHAT WAS DONE FOR APPEARANCE' SAKE.

MIDNIGHT was long past and Hilda still sat before her toilet table in deepest reverie. She shivered occasionally—for the room had become cold, and her dressing-gown was of very light muslin—but she felt no inclination either to go to bed or to open the door leading into her sister's room, which, by mutual consent, was always left ajar during the night.

‘I am sure Doris is still up,’ she murmured at length, rising slowly; ‘waiting perhaps for me to open the door and speak of Frank!’

Doris, however, was apparently not waiting, at least she had extinguished her light and was in bed.

‘Good night, Hilda! I am not asleep,’ she said in a cheerful voice.

And Hilda advanced into the room, stood beside the bed, and stooped down to kiss her.

‘How cold you are, and how dreadfully pale!’ cried Doris, as a gleam of light from the adjoining room fell on her sister's face.

Hilda turned her back to the door.

'You are not ill, I hope?' said Doris, raising herself on her elbow.

'No, I am only cold, but I do not like to go to bed until I have asked you if——if my mother said anything to Frank this evening.'

'Yes, she spoke to him alone, and at some distance from me, just before you returned home.'

'I thought so,' said Hilda; 'her anxiety that we should be reconciled is so great that she cannot be neutral; and I am sure she told him of my resolution to abide by his stipulations, and requested him to have patience with me.'

'She had not time to say much,' observed Doris, 'for Emmeran, supposing himself *de trop*, almost immediately stood up, and Frank seemed glad of the interruption; I am, however, surprised at your objecting to her saving you the annoyance of an explanation.'

'Because I am convinced she will say too much, Doris; try to excuse me, perhaps, which I consider quite unnecessary. What did he say, dear, when he heard I was at the Epplens'?'

'He said nothing, but I suspect he was disappointed, if not vexed.'

'And you, Doris,—how did you feel when you saw and spoke to him again?'

'Very glad; very happy.'

‘No recollections of Ulm? no regrets?’

‘No, dear, nothing but a desire for your mutual happiness.’

‘Now, Doris, answer me truly, and without reserve; do you think he has conquered the preference for you that made him so inexorable to me?’

‘Quite,’ replied Doris calmly; ‘I never doubted that he would; and I am much mistaken if he will not like you all the better now for the barrier he has himself placed between you.’

‘Dear Doris, do you indeed think this? you who know him so well! And may I hope that you approve of my resolution to make no more humble advances as I did at Ulm?’

‘He will expect nothing of that kind now,’ said Doris; ‘you have only to receive him graciously, to listen to his excuses patiently, and then to pardon magnanimously.’

‘I should like,’ said Hilda, ‘to punish him a little first; but then, I am sure, you would take his part and not mine.’

I have always taken part with you, Hilda, excepting the day you struck him with your riding-whip.’

‘Oh, Doris, don’t remind me of that. I wonder did he think of it this evening?’

‘Scarcely,’ she replied; ‘for we avoided speak-

ing of Ulm before you came, and afterwards, you know, we talked of nothing but the Tirolean masks. But I must say, Hilda, I think you have punished him enough by giving him so cool a reception this evening, and advise you not to be too hard upon him to-morrow, when he professes sorrow for the past and makes promises for the future.'

'I don't know what he will do or say,' observed Hilda thoughtfully, 'but I suppose we shall have some explanation before long. I wish it were over, and that I had said nothing I should regret afterwards. I have composed a great many speeches, but when the time comes to make them, shall probably forget them all.'

'And have recourse to tears?' suggested Doris.

'No,' said Hilda firmly; 'what I have to say will not bear that sort of accompaniment. If Frank only gives me a few days to overcome my embarrassment——'

'A few days!' cried Doris, interrupting her, 'you do not know Frank if you think he will give you a single day. Prepare your speech for to-morrow, Hilda, and go to bed now as fast as you can.'

The next day Hilda thought she perceived a determination on the part of her mother and sister to leave her alone in the drawing-room, about the

time that Frank was expected, and therefore remonstrated with the latter when she saw her retiring with her work in her hand.

‘I shall stay here if you wish it,’ said Doris, ‘but I think it would be far better if you had your explanation without witnesses.’

‘I cannot agree with you, Doris. Frank had no consideration of this kind in Ulm, and scorned and slighted me openly enough!’

‘But,’ said Doris, ‘I am convinced that even in Ulm he began to repent.’

‘The result of his repentance,’ observed Hilda ironically, ‘was, however, the letter to my mother complaining bitterly of having been inveigled into a marriage against his will!’

‘Remember her letter to him, Hilda; could anything be more severe?’

‘Perhaps not, but he deserved to hear the unpleasant truth from some one.’

‘Now, Hilda, if you are going to repeat any of these truths to him this morning, you really must excuse my declining to hear them, or witness the quarrel that will inevitably ensue.’

‘I don’t intend to quarrel.’

‘As if it were possible to avoid it!’

‘Stay with me, Doris, and you shall see.’

Doris hesitated.

‘I do assure you,’ she continued, half laughing,

‘I do assure you he shall find me a perfect Griselda—obedient to a fault!’

‘Now, Hilda, what do you mean?’

Before she could answer the door opened, and Frank, advancing into the middle of the room, wished them ‘good morning,’ adding, the moment the door was closed: ‘Well, here I am, as my aunt says, for appearance’ sake, and as we are to appear a thoroughly united family in public, I propose a short rehearsal of our parts in private. May I kiss you for appearance’ sake, Doris?’ he asked, approaching her with a smile.

She understood this as an appeal for a precedent, and drawing him towards her, answered gaily, ‘For old affection’s sake as often as you please, my dear cousin.’

A moment after he stood by Hilda, bent down towards her, and whispered, ‘May I?’

‘Yes, my dear *cousin*, for appearance’ sake as often as you judge necessary.’

Frank evidently did not like the manner in which permission was given, availed himself of it nevertheless, and then ‘hoped, as she laid so much stress on the word *cousin*, he might consider himself entitled to all the privileges of that singularly privileged relationship.’

‘Undoubtedly, Frank,’ she replied. ‘I only

used the word to convince you how perfectly I remembered all you said to me at Ulm.'

'I am sorry to find your memory so retentive,' he observed, biting the top of his cane in evident embarrassment. 'Emmeran gave me distinctly to understand we were mutually to forgive and forget.'

'I can forgive with all my heart, Frank,' she answered, smiling; 'and shall soon forget every thing but——your stipulations. The fact is,' she added, bending over her tapestry-frame so that her long curls fell on her cheek, and partially concealed a deep blush,—'the fact is, I now value highly the permission you gave me to go where I please and to do what I like; and I have become so perfectly satisfied with our nominal union that I can await in perfect contentment the time fixed by you for its termination.'

Hilda spoke so low that Frank had to stoop down until his head was quite close to hers in order to hear what she said, while her mother, who just then opened the door of her room, supposing their conference had come to an amicable conclusion, advanced towards them and began eagerly to express her satisfaction that their estrangement was at an end; but the moment Frank raised his head she saw her mistake, for

his face was pale and his lips quivered when he tried to smile.

'What is the meaning of this?' she asked, turning reproachfully to her daughter.

Hilda looked up, pushed back her hair from her face, and with difficulty repressing a smile of triumph, replied, 'I believe Frank is surprised to find that I have learned to make my duty my delight, and can obey his commands with pleasure.'

Frank stood up and raised his hat from the table; his aunt laid her hand on his arm, and said apologetically, 'Come, Frank, you must bear Hilda's wilfulness as she has borne yours,—with patience. I thought I said enough yesterday evening to make you understand that she had not yet been able to forgive without reserve.'

'I assure you,' interposed Hilda, demurely, 'I have not only forgiven without reserve, but also expressed my deference to his wishes in the most satisfactory manner. Frank understands me perfectly.'

'Yes,' he said, slowly, 'I understand that I have been brought here on false pretences.'

'That was mama's fault,' said Hilda, hastily; 'both Doris and I thought it would be far better to let you find your own way back to us.'

'It *would* have been far better and pleasanter

for us all,' said Frank; 'but,' he added, turning to his aunt, 'the question now is,—having come here for appearance' sake, must I remain with you?'

'It will have a very odd appearance if you do not,' she answered.

'Then,' he continued, 'then we must mutually agree to a complete cessation of hostilities.'

'Nothing can be more desirable,' she replied.

He looked towards Hilda.

She nodded her head two or three times in smiling acquiescence.

'And——and——,' he added, 'no one is to know—not even Emmeran is to be told that I have been made a fool of in this way.'

'If,' said his aunt, earnestly, 'if you do not yourself complain or explain to him, he shall never hear from us that you misunderstood my message.'

Frank walked to a window, and while he stood there in grim displeasure, Doris and her mother left the room.

A long silence ensued. Hilda heard some very impatient movements—a drumming on the window, and at last the muttered words, 'There he is already coming down the street.'

She knew he meant Emmeran, and wished to say they expected him to walk with them to Wiltau; but from the moment she had been

alone with Frank her courage had deserted her, and finding herself unable to speak unconcernedly, she remained silent, secretly rejoicing at the prospect of a speedy interruption to so disagreeable a *tête-à-tête*.

Frank's impatience visibly increased; he strode towards the door, then back to the window, and seemed still irresolute what to do until he heard Emmeran's footsteps in the anteroom; then, urged perhaps by the fear of exposing himself to ridicule, he sprang suddenly across the room, shoved with all his force one of the heavy arm-chairs close to Hilda, flung himself into it, put his arm round her, seized her hand, and as the door opened, bent down his head, and whispering, 'We must do so or say something for appearance' sake,' allowed Emmeran to suppose he had interrupted a scene of joyful reconciliation.

The moment Hilda recovered from her astonishment, the supreme absurdity of their situation provoked an inclination to laugh that she found it difficult to suppress. Frank thought there was triumph in her mirth, and drew back with such evident displeasure and mortification that Emmeran, supposing himself an intruder, stammered an apology, and prepared to leave the room.

'Pray don't go,' said Frank, rising, and almost immediately recovering his self-possession; 'Hilda

and I are not lovers, you know, and people who have been so long married ought not to be put out of countenance so easily. Our *tête-à-tête* has lasted quite long enough, I assure you.'

'I came by appointment——' began Emmeran.

'Yes,' interposed Hilda, 'and we shall be ready directly for our walk to Wiltau. Frank will, I hope, go with us, and tell us something about Vienna and his friends there. Perhaps,' she added, stopping for a moment at the door, 'perhaps he will find that we know more of *his* sayings and doings than he does of ours.'

'I dare say,' said Frank, carelessly, 'that Paltersberg's letters to my aunt kept you tolerably *au courant*.'

'There were others who have been far more communicative,' she replied; 'and,' here she raised her finger, playfully threatening, 'and you may expect to be taken to task some day when we have nothing else to talk about.'

They were all soon after on their way to Wiltau. Frank immediately drew Hilda's arm within his, and whispering gaily, 'It is all for appearance's sake, you know,' walked on with her alone.

Doris and her mother looked at each other inquiringly, while Emmeran smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and observed, 'Is it possible you expected anything else?'

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE OR HABIT?

‘WELL, Doris,’ said Frank, one morning when he found himself alone in the drawing-room with his cousin, ‘all this is very pleasant; Hilda is charming, my aunt kindness itself, and you,—precisely what I expected; but here I am, nearly at the end of my leave of absence in exactly the same position as when I entered the house. Hilda may like this sort of thing, and we have certainly been flirting away at a famous rate lately, but I think it is time to be serious now. Couldn’t you give her a hint that the next advance ought to come from her, seeing that I am ‘*en penitence*,’ as old Madame Fredon used to say.’

‘Remember Ulm,’ answered Doris; ‘recall the manner in which you received her advances then, and——have patience.’

He did remember Ulm, and thought of the painful midnight parting from the cousin by whom he now sat, apparently in very nearly the state of calm self-possession she had then pre-

dicted Time would give them both; and then he recalled the vision of a trembling childlike bride whom he had scorned, whose advances he had spurned, and was reasonable enough to check his natural impetuosity and answer quietly: 'The recollection of Ulm is not calculated to make me patient, at least not with myself, Doris; for I am now convinced that I ought either to have braved you all and persisted in my refusal to marry Hilda, or, having yielded, to have done so with a good grace. Hilda must, however, have told you that I latterly made advances to her in Ulm that were singularly ill-received.'

Doris looked up inquiringly.

'The day of the bombardment, when I accompanied her home from the hospital, she would not listen to my really penitent apologies, but pushed and pommelled me in the street, and you and others saw her a few days afterwards lash me pretty freely with her horsewhip.'

'She has long got over all that kind of impetuosity,' said Doris, smiling.

'Yes,' replied Frank, 'she seems to have taken a leaf out of your book, and to have profited so well by your instructions that she is more than a match for me now.'

'Have you any objection to her resembling me?' asked Doris.

‘I believe I would rather have her as she was at Ulm,’ he replied; ‘we should suit each other better, for I begin to think Doris that it is not judicious for a man to choose a wife so superior to him as you would have been—I mean as you certainly will be—whenever you condescend to bestow your hand and a moderate portion of dispassionate regard on——on whomsoever my words may induce you to think at this moment!’

‘I think of no one,’ said Doris quietly.

‘Don’t you?’ said Frank, laughing; ‘then what on earth brings Emmeran here every day?’

‘Habit,’ she replied.

‘Habit!’ he repeated; ‘then habit seems in a fair way to make you necessary to his happiness.’

‘It is not impossible that he may think so,’ she answered, ‘at least for some time; but change of scene and occupation enable people, especially men, to conquer such fancies with wonderful facility.’

‘I protest against the word “facility,” said Frank earnestly, ‘but if you speak from experience I dare not contradict you.’

‘Yes, Frank, I speak from experience, and you have had far more than I, if the half of what we have heard be true.’

‘What have you heard?’ he asked, colouring.

‘That there have been houses which you have

frequented quite as habitually as Emmeran does ours, and that you have had fancies which you made no effort to conceal as he does.'

'I cannot live without the society of women,' said Frank; 'and if you knew more of the world you would scarcely blame me for seeking it among people whose manners and habits most resemble those of my home.'

'I do not blame you, Frank, if you never forgot that you had neither hand nor heart at your disposal.'

'Well,' he said, leaning back in his chair and looking up to the ceiling, 'well, it was pretty generally known that in a fit of enthusiastic deference and devotion to one cousin I had bestowed my hand on another, and was not particularly happy in consequence; as to my heart, Doris, to tell the truth I did not well know what to do with it at first, and I confess that I became intimate in some pleasant houses, acquired habits rather resembling Emmeran's here, and assiduously endeavoured to banish Ulm and all that occurred there from my memory.'

'So we heard,' said Doris dryly.

'You did not mind,' he said, bending forward, 'for your affection for me was merely "habit," I suppose.'

'It was habit,' said Doris, laying down her work

and fixing her eyes calmly on his face, ‘but it had grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength ; it was the affection of nearest relationship, and what it was at Garvagh, Westenried, and Ulm, it is now and will be as long as I live.’

‘ Allow me to speak as plainly as yourself, Doris,’ he replied warmly ; ‘and in extenuation of my conduct at Ulm let me tell you that my affection for you was more than habit—it was love—a passionate first love, Doris. You and you alone were ever present in my mind when I longed for promotion, glory, and a Theresian cross ; for with all your good sense, my dear cousin, you could not conceal from me your value for the “bubble reputation,” and I would have sought it at the “canon’s mouth” to win your heart. Even as a boy I was quite aware you liked me all the better for the reckless deeds that so often brought me to grief during the holidays at Garvagh.’

Doris could not deny this. She well remembered that her preferring him to all his brothers had first been caused by his protecting her from the attack of an angry bull, having drawn the animal’s attention to himself while she and his much older brother Henry sought safety in flight ; she was conscious, too, that his hard riding, desperate driving, and wagers as wild as perilous, had found favour in her eyes, and that at a later period

she had in her heart made excuses for less pardonable proofs of courage even while compelling herself to utter words of reproach.

‘I believe,’ she said reluctantly, ‘I believe all women admire courage as a manly quality, and one that they seldom have the good fortune to possess themselves.’

‘So much the better,’ said Frank; ‘I don’t think courage at all necessary for a woman excepting when on horseback;—for men it is indispensable, but is so common, dear Doris, that he who possesses nothing else is poor indeed! I am afraid you think this is my case, and if Hilda be of the same opinion, the sooner I join my regiment again the better.’

While Frank was speaking Hilda had entered the room, and he named her just as she stood opposite him with her hand on the back of her sister’s chair.

‘Don’t you think, Doris,’ she said, bending forwards and speaking in an audible whisper, ‘don’t you think he wants us to contradict him?’

‘He wants more than that,’ answered Doris, laughing; ‘but we won’t spoil him with flattery like the ladies of Vienna and Prague.’

‘And Innsbruck, too,’ said Hilda; ‘our friends tell me that I can form no idea of his sudden popularity here.’

‘That,’ said Frank, ‘is easily accounted for when you remember that I am an Austrian officer; believe me, Hilda, my popularity here is altogether political.’

‘And elsewhere?’ she asked.

‘I am not aware of any,’ he answered. ‘Colonel Bereny and General Vacquant gave me introductions, and people were kind and hospitable, perhaps in consideration of my being so far from my own country and kindred.’

‘We have heard that some were more than kind,’ persisted Hilda, with heightened colour; ‘that in one house you were every day and all day!’

‘I was aide-de-camp, and had my horses there.’

‘And now?’

‘I am no longer aide-de-camp,’ he replied, laughing, ‘but I am every day and all day at General Vacquant’s house. Have you any objection?’

‘Oh no, not the least. I suppose, Frank, that six years hence, when the war is quite ended, you will be a general—or at least a colonel?’

‘The chances are in my favour just now,’ he answered.

‘And then, Frank, we, too, shall have aides-de-camp, shan’t we?’

‘Perhaps *I* shall,’ he said, colouring very perceptibly.

‘And they will have their horses in our stables, she continued; ‘and be every day and all day in our house?’

‘That will depend upon circumstances,’ he replied; ‘for though I should have no objection to a quiet, steady fellow such as I am——’

At this moment a servant entered with a note which had been sent from a neighbouring hotel.

Frank’s colour deepened as he read, and an expression of intense annoyance passed over his features.

‘No answer,’ he said, looking up for a moment; ‘I shall call in the course of the afternoon.’ Then twisting the note round his fingers, he turned again to Hilda, and continued—‘What were we talking about? Was it not of the time when we should be living together——’

‘No, we were talking of aides-de-camp,’ she said, quickly; ‘and I wish to bespeak one who can ride, drive, walk, talk, sing, and dance with me. I should like him to have a good deal of general information, a decided predilection for England and everything English, and, if he be a Hungarian, so much the better, as I can take advantage of the opportunity to learn his language!’

‘I shall attend to your directions,’ said Frank, ‘and when the time comes seek a Hungarian

answering this description. With regard to the language, if you have any fancy for it, I can give you some instruction beforehand myself; for when I was appointed to my present regiment, I was obliged, as a matter of course, to learn it.'

'We heard so,' she observed, pointedly; 'and from all accounts were led to suppose that you found the wife of your Colonel, Madame de Beryny, an extremely agreeable instructress.'

'An extremely agreeable acquaintance, or rather friend,' he replied; 'but for the Hungarian language I had a master every day for a year.'

'Perhaps, then, you only frequented her house so assiduously in order to acquire fluency in speaking?'

'Not exactly,' said Frank, rising with the evident intention of leaving the room; 'I liked both the Colonel and his wife, had a general invitation to their house, and felt as much at home there as I do here.'

'Perhaps more?' suggested Hilda, with some pique.

'That might easily be,' he answered, in the same tone, while closing the door.

'Well, Doris, I hope you are now convinced that all we have heard is true?'

'No, Hilda, I am much more convinced that

all my misgivings about your jealousy were well founded ; and I am sorry you have betrayed yourself to Frank.'

'I could not help it, Doris ; everything he does, everything he says, convinces me that his coming here was a mere duty without a particle of inclination, excepting, perhaps, to see you again ! He tried to hate me at Ulm, and I believe failed in his efforts ; he is trying to like me now, perhaps, and seems equally unsuccessful !'

'I am quite sure, Hilda, he likes you as much as any reasonable woman could desire.'

'But I am not reasonable on this subject,' said Hilda.

'I am glad you are aware of it,' observed Doris, 'for Frank seems to think so too, and expects the next advance to come from you.'

'He may wait long for it,' replied Hilda.

'I hope not,' said Doris ; 'remember you are his wife, and that an effort to conciliate on your part is the most natural thing imaginable.'

'Oh, very likely ; but I shall never attempt anything of the kind again, and I hope you will explain this to him.'

'No, dear, I do not at all like this office of mediating, which you both seem so determined to force upon me. Frank requested me to tell you that he expected you to yield a little now ; you

say he may wait a while. I hope he may do so, and not relax in demonstrations of affection that ought to have removed all your jealous doubts.'

'They have not removed them,' said Hilda; 'I believe all that I have heard, and am as convinced as I was before he came here that he consoled himself for your loss and altogether forgot me in the house of this Madame de Bereny.'

'As far as I am concerned,' said Doris, 'he is more than consoled, for he has just given me to understand that he now knows I was not at all a person calculated to have made him happy.'

'Dear Doris, did he say that?' exclaimed Hilda, with irrepressible exultation; 'did he indeed say that,—and to you?'

'Something to that purport, at all events,' answered Doris. 'But, oh, Hilda!' she added, reproachfully, 'can it be possible that all this time you have been jealous of me too?'

'No, Doris, no; that would be too unreasonable! No, not jealous,—certainly not in the common sense of the word; but how could I be sure that Frank would not again see and feel your superiority to me and every one? How could I be certain that his first love would not return with double force?—Oh! Doris,' she cried, sud-

denly covering her face with her hands, 'I know you must hate and despise me for this weakness.'

'No,' said Doris, sorrowfully, 'I rather pity you; and greatly fear, if you cannot conquer it, you will not only make yourself unhappy, but also weary and worry Frank beyond endurance.'

'Doris,' cried Hilda, petulantly, 'it is easy for you to reprove and warn,—you, with your calm, cousinly affection for Frank, and your phlegmatic friendship for Emmeran! What can you know of jealousy?'

'Nothing,' answered Doris, 'excepting that I do not consider it a proof of love.'

'Don't you?' said Hilda; 'but I do, and intend to put Frank to the test by it.'

'I advise you not, Hilda, for I suspect his education and habits would rather prompt him to demand explanations from the supposed rival than from you. Remember what occurred at Ulm before your marriage.'

'This is intolerable!' cried Hilda. 'Here have I been all this time, never venturing to dance twice at a ball with the same person, never receiving morning visitors, and giving up riding because our escort had become too numerous, while Frank has been amusing himself morning, noon, and night at this Madame de Bereny's, not

to mention all the other demi and demi-semi flirtations of which we have heard.'

'I don't believe the half of what we have heard,' said Doris, 'and advise you to judge of Frank for yourself. Just determine to suppose yourself not yet married to him——'

'That I can do very easily,' interposed Hilda.

'And,' continued Doris — 'and also suppose Frank merely a person from whom you had reason to expect a proposal of marriage——'

'Well, Doris, that seems to me exactly my position during the last three weeks, but he will not propose; he says everything but that!'

'Probably,' said Doris, 'he fears another repulse; and, indeed, you refer so continually to the foolish stipulations made by him at Ulm that I do not wonder at his cautions.'

'It seems,' observed Hilda, 'that Frank and I are doomed to be at odds like all the rest of the world. I could almost suppose that I represented Bavaria, and Frank Austria; we are at present observing each other and manœuvring, but a very little provocation on either side would again cause an open declaration of war.'

'Avoid that,' said Doris, 'if you possibly can.'

'Yes, dear, I mean to do so; but you, being France, ought to help Bavaria——'

'Not I,' said Doris, laughing; 'I am England,

and side with Austria. Emmeran may, if you like, represent France——’

And just at that moment they heard him speaking to their mother in the adjoining room, the door of which he had partly opened.

‘How often one thinks and speaks of people who chance to be near us!’ observed Hilda.

‘Emmeran has brought some one with him,’ said Doris, turning her head in the direction of another voice that just then named Hilda in eager inquiry.

‘It is Sigmund!’ said Hilda. ‘What can have induced him to come here? If you are the attraction, Doris, I hope you will occupy his attention exclusively, for there is no one whose observation I should dread so much; he will watch every look and weigh every word until he find out the hollow truce between Frank and me. If I had only refrained from mentioning this odious Madame de Bereny to-day——or if Frank could at all conceal his feelings——but there is no chance for us; this time to-morrow Sigmund will know everything we wish to conceal, and we shall not have even an idea of the motives that induced him to come to Innsbruck!’

CHAPTER V.

CROSS PURPOSES.

SIGMUND received a very cool reception from both Doris and Hilda, a frigid bow from Frank, when they met at dinner, and all three declined speaking French, or appearing in the least interested in his adventures during his two years' sojourn at Paris. The most touching anecdotes of Napoleon's magnanimity, the most amazing accounts of the splendour of the French Court, having failed to elicit a remark from Hilda, he at length turned to her and observed: 'Well, Hilda, my father was right when he said you would soon become a staunch Austrian. O'More's politics are yours now, of course; so I scarcely know whether you will be glad or sorry to hear that we are again on the eve of war.'

'I am sorry, very sorry,' said Hilda; 'but Frank has been too little with me to have had any influence on my political opinions, so you may consider me quite Bavarian still.'

'Indeed! Then perhaps you get the Augsburg

paper regularly, and know what is going on in the world; most people here seem in utter ignorance of everything, excepting that the conscription is unpopular, and that the peasants' sons have fled to the mountains to avoid being enlisted.'

'There are more things unpopular than the conscription,' interposed Doris; 'but we have no means of showing our discontent at present otherwise than by confiding our presentiments of evil, and repeating peasant prophecies of war, to whoever will listen to us.'

'If you have had any presentiments,' said Sigmund, 'it would interest me extremely to hear them.' And he glanced, while speaking, from Doris to Frank.

The latter appeared wholly occupied with the fruit on his plate, and did not even look up.

'I have a strong presentiment,' answered Doris, 'that this state of affairs cannot last:' and the scarcely perceptible colour in her cheeks deepened to a bright pink, as she continued: 'of course we shall have war, never-ending war, until all make common cause with England against France.'

'Nothing less probable than that,' said Sigmund, shrugging his shoulders. 'Is not Austria just now preparing to invade Bavaria, in order to resume the power and privileges formerly possessed by the Emperors of Germany?'

‘That is your view of the case,’ said Doris ; ‘I may be allowed to think that Austria only wants to free herself and others from French thralldom, and to recover her lost territories. Tirol, of course, first of all.’

‘I, for one,’ said Sigmund, ‘should have no objection to resign Tirol, which is a burthen to us—a superstitious, unruly people, whose demands it is impossible to satisfy.’

‘Superstitious they may be,’ said Doris ; ‘but they are a loyal and courageous people, and Austrian to their heart’s core.’

‘You think, perhaps,’ said Sigmund, again glancing towards Frank—‘you think that, in case of a war, they will rebel and join Austria?’

‘I don’t know—I hope they may.’

‘But, in that case, Innsbruck is no place for you, my aunt, or Hilda, and I can only trust you will all return with me to Westenried.’

‘We have nothing to fear,’ said Doris. ‘Mama and I will be a protection to Hilda from the “rebels,” as you call them ; and she and Emmeran must defend us in return from the French, who, of course, will make their appearance soon after the first cannon-shot.’

‘If O’More do not urge you to leave Innsbruck,’ said Sigmund—and this time he fixed his eyes steadily on Frank—‘there is probably no-

thing to be apprehended. I consider his allowing you to remain here a sort of guarantee for the peace of Tirol.'

Frank did not choose to take the least notice of this speech, and continued his occupation of carving a double eagle out of a piece of orange-peel.

'General Kinkel said something similar to me yesterday,' observed Hilda; 'but I told him that Frank never interfered with our plans or movements, and, as well as I could judge, seemed to consider Innsbruck a very suitable and pleasant place of residence for us.'

'If you gave the General such an assurance, Hilda, it must have been very satisfactory to him,' observed Sigmund.

'I should rather think,' said Hilda, 'it must be a matter of perfect indifference to him where we lived.'

'Very likely, at any other time,' said Sigmund; 'but just now General Kinkel may naturally suppose that O'More would use all his influence to induce you to leave Innsbruck, if there were the slightest chance of a rebellion.'

'There is none,' said Hilda, confidently; 'but even if there were, I really do not know to what place we could go.'

'To Westenried,' answered Sigmund; 'nothing

would give me greater satisfaction than being able to persuade you to return with me to Bavaria.'

'No, Sigmund; mama intends to wait until you are married before she again resides in her apartments there.'

'That is unfortunate,' said Sigmund, with unusual earnestness; 'let me, however, hope I may be of use as escort to Ulm or Forsteck?'

'I—that is we—dislike both places, and would not meet the people there now for any consideration.'

'Indeed! I was not aware of that.'

'Besides,' added Hilda, hastily, 'it is absolutely necessary for mama's health that we should spend the autumn in Meran, so you see if we were to leave Tirol we could only go to some place in Austria.'

'That would never answer,' observed Sigmund; 'for they say we are on the eve of a war that will end precisely like that of the year *five*!'

'May I ask who you mean by "they"?' asked Frank, looking up at last.

'No, Frank, you may not,' interposed his aunt, rising from the dinner-table; 'nor may Sigmund continue to speak in inuendoes that only serve to irritate and remind us of our different political opinions.'

'I assure you, dear aunt,' began Sigmund, 'I

meant nothing offensive in supposing that O'More might be better informed of the state of Tirol than I am.'

'Perhaps so,' she answered; 'but I must insist on the avoidance of all political discussions. What is the use of perpetually quarelling about the actions of people over whom we have no control? or angrily discussing events over which we have had no influence? Our want of unanimity in politics is unfortunate; but, as we are not likely to change each other's opinions, I must prohibit the subject altogether.'

'Be it so,' replied Sigmund; 'after such a long separation we can be at no loss for conversation,'—and he took a place beside Doris when they entered the drawing-room, from which he never moved during the remainder of the evening.

Frank and Hilda were unusually embarrassed in consequence of their conversation about Madame de Bereny, and though the consciousness of being watched intently by Sigmund's penetrating eyes induced them to speak to each other occasionally, there was something in the manner of both that immediately excited his curiosity and induced him, after he had taken leave, to accompany his brother home, instead of returning at once to his hotel.

Now, though Emmeran was not at all disposed

to be communicative, Sigmund elicited enough by means of cross-questioning to confirm his suspicions that Hilda and Frank were by no means on such good terms as they wished people to suppose, and that Doris had not found any one to take Frank's place.

'I rather expected by this time to find a rival in you,' said Sigmund carelessly.

'A rival?'

'Yes, after a fashion. She might have got used to your society, you know, and discovered that you are a good sort of fellow in the main; that would be enough in time to induce Doris to marry you or any one, I should think.'

'Thank you for the hint,' said Emmeran dryly.

'It was no hint, Emmeran, it was merely a supposition, which I am glad to find without foundation. The fact is, living in Paris is very expensive, and my finances are at so low an ebb that I must again and seriously think of marriage. My father has never forgiven my interference about Mina—to hear him talk one would really suppose I had deliberately taken her life—so I have nothing further to expect from him; you have barely enough for yourself in these hard times; and after having enjoyed so many years' liberty, I have no fancy to enter the army again: what then remains

but matrimony? Now, as you sapiently observed this morning, I am not a man to come to Innsbruck without a motive——’ Here Sigmund paused.

‘Am I to understand,’ asked Emmeran, with wonderful composure, ‘that you have come here to propose to Doris?’

‘No——I did not come for that purpose——but——I am inclined to think it would be my best plan now; her fortune would answer well enough, though I should be very glad it were larger, and that I had not to wait until her mother’s death for the best half of it; however, I still like and admire Doris immensely, and when I take into consideration, that at the time she refused me so decidedly at Westenried, she had been strongly prejudiced against me by Mina, and had not had time to forgive my having aided and abetted in her separation from Frank, I think the present time far more favourable, and have little doubt of success.’

‘I never knew you had actually spoken to her of marriage,’ said Emmeran, ‘and cannot imagine how you had courage under the circumstances.’

‘It would certainly have been wiser had I been less precipitate in every way,’ said Sigmund; ‘but at that time I thought altogether of love, and not

in the least of money, and a precious fool I made of myself !’

‘Don’t do it again,’ said Emmeran.

‘No danger ; the chances that were mine at Ulm are lost for ever, but as a marriage with Doris would now be an act of wisdom on my part, the effort must be made and at once : to-morrow, perhaps, if an opportunity offer. I am sorry to interfere with any plans you may have formed, Emmeran, but you see I can’t help myself.’

‘I have no plans, Sigmund ; I have never dared to tell Doris that I love her.’

‘More fool you, and all the better for me,’ answered Sigmund. ‘Good night ! Dine with me to-morrow, and you shall hear the result of my conference with Doris.’

He nodded his head and turned in the direction of his hotel, the way towards which led him back to a more central part of the town, and past the house where his aunt lodged. What more natural than that he should look up at the windows of the still lighted rooms and speculate which was inhabited by Doris ? And he did look up, but only for a moment, as his attention was almost immediately attracted by the opening of a small door, made for the convenience of pedestrians at the side of the *porte cochère*. A man stepped into the street, and having turned round and carefully

relocked the door, drew up the collar of his cloak, pressed his hat over his brow, and walked quickly down the street.

Had this occurred elsewhere, it is more than probable that Sigmund would not have felt sufficient interest or curiosity to look a second time in that direction ; but an inmate and the possessor of a key to that house was well worth another glance, and that glance was sufficient to make him certain that the person now striding on before him was no other than Frank, who so short a time previously had haughtily bowed him a 'good night,' and then, bed-chamber candlestick in hand, sedately walked with his aunt, Doris, and Hilda, along the corridor to his room !

Many wild conjectures passed through Sigmund's mind, but all were at fault when he discovered that Frank was actually going to the hotel where he himself lodged ; by walking a little slower, he allowed him to enter alone the still lighted entrance to the house, observed that he spoke a few words to one of the waiters, and then springing up the stairs seemed to require no further directions.

The same waiter stood by the staircase as Sigmund approached it, civil and loquacious as such persons generally are, so that a question or two concerning the new arrivals soon procured the

information that a Hungarian lady, Madame de Bereny, had arrived that afternoon, and was now in possession of the rooms adjoining his.

‘And a——that gentleman who has just gone up stairs?’ said Sigmund.

‘That is an officer in her husband’s regiment. She sent to him immediately after her arrival, and he came for a short time to make arrangements for her, as her servants are all Hungarians, and speak very little German.’

‘I suppose,’ said Sigmund, ‘he has come here now to complete these arrangements?’

‘I am not quite sure of that,’ answered the waiter, ‘for he rather seemed to think our house too noisy for her, and recommended a removal to a private lodging.’

‘Quite a friend of the family,’ observed Sigmund.

‘Without doubt,’ answered the waiter; ‘for he knew all the servants by name, and the lady’s lap-dog nearly went mad with delight when he saw him.’

Sigmund walked up stairs to his room, opened and closed the door very quietly, and then threw himself at full length on a sofa.

Now this sofa was placed against the door of communication with the adjoining apartment, and it is probable that a similar piece of furniture

was there also so placed, for Sigmund soon heard Frank and Madame de Bereny's voices in eager conversation. He could distinguish every tone and word, but—they spoke in a language unknown to him, which he naturally supposed to be Hungarian, yet felt exceedingly irritated at the lady not preferring German, French, or even English, which would have enabled him at once to ascertain all he wanted to know.

Sigmund, however, soon felt convinced that he knew enough to put Frank in some measure in his power, for were not this visit to Madame de Bereny a secret assuredly some other hour would have been chosen for it. He resolved to see his brother in the morning, and cross-question him again about Frank and Hilda,—for he began once more strongly to suspect there was continued repugnance on one side, and pique, if not indifference, on the other. Such feelings under the circumstances were so possible, so probable, that he had in fact come to Innsbruck fully prepared to find it so; and nothing but Frank's presence, and his being domiciled in his aunt's house, could have made him believe the contrary.

It was while Sigmund was with Emmeran at an early hour on the following day, that Frank entered the drawing-room and lounged on a sofa there, with a book in his hand, until the hour that

Doris usually made her appearance. The moment he saw her and had convinced himself that Hilda was not following, he started up and approached her, exclaiming, 'Give me advice and assistance, Doris; I am in a horrible dilemma.'

'About what, Frank?'

'Hilda is jealous, and——Madame de Bereny is here!'

'And what has induced Madame de Bereny to come to Innsbruck?' she asked gravely.

'Her health. She is on her way to Meran.'

'But,' said Doris, 'it is too early for Meran.'

'Just so,' he answered; 'and therefore she intends to remain a short time here.'

'A very singular arrangement, to say the least,' observed Doris.

'Not at all,' he replied; 'her husband is likely to be in active service and wishes her out of the way, as she is very delicate and cannot bear much knocking about.'

'She knew you were here?' said Doris.

'Of course,' he answered, 'and expects me to make all sorts of arrangements for her.'

'That is natural enough,' observed Doris, 'when you have been so much in her house.'

'Quite natural,' said Frank; 'but do you suppose Hilda will think so?'

Doris was silent.

‘ You know she will not,’ he continued, ‘ and Madame de Bereny wants to be introduced to my aunt and you and Hilda. I wish I had had the good fortune to have left Innsbruck before she came ; nothing but the hope of a satisfactory explanation with Hilda has detained me latterly, and now I see no prospect of anything but a regular blow up !’

‘ Perhaps you had better return to Vienna at once,’ suggested Doris.

‘ I can’t, dear girl, until I have got lodgings for Madame de Bereny here and written about apartments for her at Meran. You have no idea how helpless she is ! If she were only fairly out of that hotel it would be a great relief to me, for Sigmund’s rooms are near hers, and in order to avoid meeting him I was obliged to call on her last night after you had all gone to bed !’

‘ And she received you so late ?’

‘ Why not ? she supposed we had had company, and it was not necessary for me to explain.’

‘ You must be very intimate,’ said Doris.

‘ Very,’ said Frank ; ‘ quite like relations.’

‘ And a——is she young and handsome ?’

‘ I declare I never thought about her age,’ he answered, ‘ but should think her a good deal older than either you or Hilda at all events. She is a very attractive woman, and her eyes especially

are quite beautiful, just like yours, only the eye-lashes are not so long and black.'

'I wish,' said Doris, 'that for Hilda's sake she were much older and less engaging.'

'Oh, well, so do I,' said Frank; 'but the question now is, do you think my aunt will object to know her?'

'I think it will altogether depend upon Hilda,' answered Doris.

'Then,' said Frank, 'you must undertake to explain everything, and persuade Hilda to be good-natured and civil.'

'And if she should decline the acquaintance of your attractive friend, Frank?'

'In that case,' he answered, 'I shall be under the necessity of using all my influence to induce Madame de Bereny to leave Innsbruck without delay.'

'Do so, Frank,' cried Doris eagerly; 'it will be much the best plan.'

'I would rather not,' he said reluctantly, 'for you see, dear, if I have not time to write and make arrangements about her lodgings at Meran I must go there with her myself.'

'Nonsense, Frank! she could not be so unreasonable as to expect anything of the kind.'

'She brought me a letter from her husband,' he continued, 'and he requests me either to esta-

blish her here under the protection of my relations, or—to take her to Meran.’

‘Then,’ said Doris, bending over her work-table, and diligently arranging its contents, ‘then it was not at his desire that you relaxed in your attentions to her and ceased to be his aide-de-camp?’

‘Not at all,’ answered Frank; ‘my promotion would have obliged me to resign at all events, and it was Madame de Bereny herself who requested me to sacrifice the pleasure of her society in order to silence the slanderous tongues of her best friends and most intimate acquaintances.’

‘She was right,’ said Doris.

‘Of course she was,’ rejoined Frank; ‘we continue as good friends as ever, and more than ever enjoy a meeting when an occasion offers, for it is astonishing how difficulties of any kind enhance the value of intercourse. Hilda seems to understand this sort of thing perfectly, for her pride and prudery have made me more in love with her than I ever thought possible.’

‘I am glad to hear that,’ said Doris.

‘Are you? then you must listen to the rest of it. I never until yesterday even suspected that she was of a jealous disposition, and a more disagreeable discovery I could hardly have made, for my wife might have had almost any other

fault with impunity; but to weigh my words and looks to suit a jealous woman's fancy is a lesson I can never learn, and I am so convinced of this that I do not even intend to try.'

'You always seem to forget,' observed Doris, 'how little your conduct has been calculated to give her confidence in you.'

'No, Doris, that consideration alone has enabled me to be "like patience on a monument smiling at grief" ever since I came here.'

Doris laughed.

'You may think it very amusing,' said Frank; 'but I can scarcely imagine a more absurd or irritating position than mine lately. As long as I thought Hilda was punishing me for my misdeemeanours at Ulm, I was obliged to be patient; but I shall positively rebel if she intend to call me to account for my sayings and doings at Vienna, and take it into her head to be jealous, and jealous without cause, too!'

'Without cause!' repeated Doris; 'can I with truth give Hilda this assurance?'

Frank hesitated for a moment, and then said, 'May I speak without reserve——may I confess——'

'No, Frank,' said Doris, rising, 'I think you had better not; but do try and persuade this Madame de Bereny to leave Innsbruck.'

‘Dearest Doris,’ he cried, catching her hand as she was passing and detaining her; ‘you mistake me altogether. I was not thinking of Madame de Bereny. Hilda could only gain by a comparison with her, or indeed with any one I have ever known, excepting yourself. Of you alone, Doris, she might with some sort of reason be jealous, for I—I cannot help myself, I—— Now don’t be angry,’ he added, colouring deeply; ‘all I mean to say,—all I have to confess is, that if Hilda will not teach me to forget, I am very likely to fall back into my old “habit,” as you call it; in which case the remedy you recommended yesterday—change of scene and occupation—will become absolutely necessary for me.’

At this moment the door opened, and Sigmund advanced into the room.

‘I hope, Doris,’ said Frank, when he saw her about to leave them, ‘I hope you are going to tell my aunt and Hilda what I have said about Madame de Bereny; and while you are doing so, I shall just have time to write a letter to Pallerberg and take it to the post.’

CHAPTER VI.

A RETORT UN-COURTEOUS.

FRANK wrote, and Sigmund sat at no great distance with a book in his hand, over the pages of which his eyes inquisitively followed the quickly-moving pen. The letter was so short and so hastily written, that commencement and signature alike required pressure on the blotting-paper before folding, and Frank pushed back his chair and stood up while extending his hand for a wafer.

‘If your letter contain any important information,’ observed Sigmund, ‘I recommend your using sealing-wax.’

‘Do you think it will make any difference?’ asked Frank; ‘is there any chance of a letter from me to Pallersberg escaping inspection just now?’

‘Not much if you use a wafer,’ answered Sigmund, ‘for of course there are people here who think you have eyes and ears, and may mention what you have seen and heard to a friend, especially if he be a military man.’

Frank lit a taper and sealed his letter.

At the door he met Hilda, and forgetful of 'appearances' and Sigmund's presence, he first formally wished her good morning, and then hoped she was satisfied with Doris's explanation and would have no objection to see Madame de Bereny.

Her look of astonishment induced him to add, 'Oh——I perceive you have not yet seen Doris—pray go to her and let me speak to you when I return from the post.'

He left the room without waiting for an answer, and Hilda, under the influence of anxiety and curiosity, was hurrying towards the door of her mother's room without noticing Sigmund, when he called out, 'Come, Hilda, if your husband thinks it necessary to be so immensely respectful when saying good morning, I scarcely know what kind of obeisance will suit my more distant relationship.'

'Frank does not breakfast with us,' she said, as if in apology, 'but he has evidently desired Doris to explain something to me, and therefore you must amuse yourself as you best can until our discussion is over.'

'It seems,' observed Sigmund, 'that Doris is the medium of communication between you and your husband,—when I came here just now he was probably giving her a message for you, but why doesn't he speak to you himself instead of

desiring *her* to inform you that Madame de Bereny has followed him to Innsbruck ?’

Hilda changed colour, and breathed quickly, while she compelled herself with forced composure to ask if he were quite sure that ‘that was what Doris had to tell her?’

‘There can be no doubt of it,’ he answered, ‘as Madame de Bereny’s name was distinctly mentioned, and Frank asked if you were satisfied with Doris’s explanation.’

‘There is nothing to be explained,’ said Hilda, walking to the window, and pretending to look out in order to conceal her agitation. ‘It is very evident that if he could speak to Doris on the subject, Madame de Bereny must be altogether to-blame!’

‘Nothing more likely,’ said Sigmund; ‘I have no doubt he is uncommonly bored by her coming here just now, and may even have told her so in his peculiarly candid manner when he went to see her at the hotel last night.’

‘You forget,’ said Hilda, ‘that last night we were all together in this room.’

‘Yes, until eleven o’clock; but where were we at midnight?’

‘Sigmund, that is not—that cannot be true.’

‘Well, perhaps not, Hilda; at all events I am sorry I said anything, as most probably Frank pleaded some other engagement to you.’

‘No,’ she said, regaining her self-possession, ‘I know nothing of his engagements. There is but little confidence between us—as yet.’

‘So I perceive,’ observed Sigmund, seating himself at the writing table and turning over the leaves of the blotting-paper.

‘Some explanation, however, is absolutely necessary now,’ she continued, coming towards him and leaning on the back of his chair.

‘Then I think,’ he replied, ‘you had better apply to Doris, who is authorised to give it.’

‘But,’ said Hilda, ‘an explanation given by her, and mixed with excuses for Frank, will put me out of all patience ; she is absolutely blind to his faults !’

‘Indeed ?’

‘Yes, and mama also, at least when either of them speak to me of him. Now you——’

‘I,’ said Sigmund, ‘have never been blind to his faults. I think him a wild, good-for-nothing fellow ; an insolent coxcomb, who thinks, where women are concerned, he has only to come, see, and conquer ! Emmeran tells me you have been trying to show him that he is not quite so irresistible as he supposed, but how little you have succeeded you may see by reading what he has written in your paper book.’

He took it up and read with strong emphasis the following lines :—

‘The “lost one” is as devotedly and passionately attached as ever. The separation forgiven, and the intense desire for re-union beyond my most sanguine expectations.’

‘Frank wrote that in my book!’ exclaimed Hilda, extending her hand for it.

‘Not exactly, not intentionally. The fact is, Hilda, this is a letter to Pallersberg, written just before you came into the room; the ink must have been quite wet when pressed on the blotting-paper, for the writing is perfectly legible on the other side.’

Hilda drew back. ‘I misunderstood you,’ she said reprovingly, ‘and supposed Frank had written something in my book that he intended me to read. No temptation would have induced me to look at what he wrote to another person.’

‘Well, you have only listened to it,’ said Sigmund ironically; ‘and I must explain that I should not have endeavoured to find out what he wrote to Pallersberg, had I not expected to obtain some very important political information couched in the metaphorical language which we have heard the Tiroleans use on such occasions.’

‘And then you intended to betray him!’ cried Hilda, indignantly.

‘I should not have betrayed *him* personally, because he happens to be your husband, Hilda;

but I do not deny that I intended to have made use of any information I might have obtained in this way, well knowing that Frank is good authority, and taking it for granted that he would not write if he had not a question to answer. It seems, however, that I was mistaken; he is evidently more occupied with you than with politics just now; and, believe me, I should not blame him in the least, did I not see how ill he requites the "devotion" and "passionate attachment" of which he boasts with such arrogance.'

Now though Hilda's affection for her husband did not waver for a moment, she felt herself just then in the position of a neglected and injured wife, and that Frank should have written so triumphantly to Pellersberg mortified her beyond endurance. She therefore allowed Sigmund to call her marriage a 'sacrifice,' and listened without interruption to his assurances that no act of his life caused him so much regret as having aided in promoting such a union.

There was far more truth in this last observation than Hilda suspected, and Sigmund was becoming eager and eloquent on the subject, when Frank's return caused a sudden interruption.

Sigmund ceased speaking, but could not altogether conceal his embarrassment; Hilda merely removed her hand from her eyes, and then

covered them again without moving from the back of the chair on which she had been leaning; while Frank, who had entered from his aunt's apartment, and knew she had not yet seen Doris, slowly advanced, and gravely requested permission to speak to her alone in the dining-room.

‘Rather, allow me to leave you together,’ said Sigmund, rising; ‘I have not yet seen either my aunt or Doris, and can take the opportunity of going to them.’

‘Hilda, I have much to say to you,’ began Frank, with unusual diffidence; ‘will you not sit down?’

Hilda took the vacant chair at the writing-table, and, as her eyes fell on the blotting-paper, she hardened her heart, and regained perfect outward composure.

Frank advanced to the place where she had previously been standing; and, instantly following her glance towards the table, saw with dismay the counterpart of his letter to Pallersberg in thick, blotted, but perfectly distinct characters, exposed to view. The blood mounted to his temples and swelled the veins there while he exclaimed indignantly: ‘I need not ask who took advantage of my haste and carelessness to ascertain what I wrote to Pallersberg! I could perhaps have for-

given, even while contemning, such a means of obtaining what might be supposed important political information ; but it was the act of a contemptible scoundrel to show the writing to you, and endeavour to incense you against me !’

‘I am not in the least incensed,’ said Hilda calmly.

‘Then you might be, and with reason,’ said Frank, ‘if I could not give you the solemn assurance that I never thought of you when I wrote those lines.’

Hilda looked up amazed. ‘May I read them ?’ she asked, extending her hand towards the table, and drawing the book nearer.

Frank could not refuse, but felt instantly conscious that he had spoken thoughtlessly.

Hilda seemed to weigh every word ; then placed her hand on the writing, and asked : ‘Of whom *did* you think ?’

Frank made no attempt to answer.

‘Of Madame de Bereny, perhaps ?’

‘No, on my honour,’ he replied, in a tone of extreme vexation.

‘Excuse my supposing she might be this “*lost one*,”’ said Hilda, with bitter irony. ‘That she is “*as devotedly and passionately attached as ever*,” I have no doubt. I even remember hearing that a partial separation or diminution of intimacy had

taken place——she might have “*forgiven*” this, you know ; and certainly nothing but a very “*intense desire for re-union*” could have induced her to follow you to Innsbruck !’

‘She has not followed me,’ said Frank ; ‘*Madame de Bereny* is on her way to Meran.’

‘And,’ continued Hilda, ‘do you think she would have come to Innsbruck now if you had not been here ?’

‘I have no reason to suppose she would not,’ he answered. ‘My leave of absence is almost expired, and if she wished to see me here it was probably for the purpose of obtaining through me an introduction to you and my aunt.’

‘And you,’ said Hilda quickly,—‘you have, of course, explained the impossibility of proposing anything of the kind to me ?’

‘No,’ said Frank ; ‘I hoped, with Doris’s assistance, to persuade you to do a kind action ; it need not be more than a formal interchange of visits ; and if you do not like her, you can avoid all intimacy.’

‘I shall avoid all intercourse with such a person,’ said Hilda, rising ; ‘and I am surprised to hear that Doris even listened to your proposal.’

‘I half expected this refusal,’ rejoined Frank ; ‘but think when you hear the consequences of a persistence in it, you will yield a little. The

Berenys have been so very kind and hospitable to me, Hilda, that it is incumbent on me to pay her every attention in my power; she has brought me a letter from her husband, in which he confides her to my care; and if you will not see and know her, I must conceal the affront by persuading her to continue her journey to Meran without stopping here.'

'Persuade her to go away by all means,' said Hilda, angrily; 'the sooner the better!'

'In that case,' continued Frank, 'Colonel Bereny has requested me to accompany her to Meran—and—I shall do so.'

'Do what you like, and go where you please,' cried Hilda, passionately, quoting his own words to her at Ulm; and before she had time to repent her violence, Frank had seized his hat and left the room.

* * * * *

'He only wanted an excuse to go off with her!' said Hilda, vehemently, when her mother a few hours later read aloud a letter she had just received from Frank; 'and as to his advice that we should remove to Meran before the month of April, I consider it merely a *ruse* to draw us into an acquaintance with that odious woman.'

‘Rather a warning well worth consideration,’ answered her mother. ‘Frank has hitherto thought himself unauthorized to interfere with your plans, but in this letter he mentions expressly that some information which he has lately procured prompts the advice. I think we might go to Meran, and easily avoid knowing Madame de Bereny.’

‘As if,’ said Hilda,—‘as if it were probable that you and Doris would not then cheat me into conciliating Frank by attention to her!’

‘There was a time when I might have been tempted to do so,’ said her mother; ‘but I am now convinced that it was a great mistake my trying to force a reconciliation between you, and I shall never attempt anything of the kind again.’

‘Then, dear mama, let us not think of leaving Innsbruck until September, when change of air and ripe grapes will be necessary for your health; and, in the mean time, we may hope that the heat of a Meran summer will disgust Madame de Bereny with the climate, and induce her to return to her husband before we take up our abode there for the winter.’

Emmeran was just then dining with his brother at the hotel, and waiting in vain for the expected information respecting Doris: he thought of

nothing else; but it was not until they were about to separate that he asked Sigmund the result of his interview with her.

‘The interview,’ he answered, smiling, ‘turned out an ordinary morning visit in presence of my aunt; but I did not wish it otherwise, as, in consequence of a conversation with Hilda, I had already determined to reconsider the matter, and observe carefully the state of affairs here before I again committed myself.’

‘A very wise resolution,’ observed Emmeran.

‘I think it is,’ continued Sigmund, ‘though not in the sense you mean. Circumstances favour me singularly, and now make the success of a previous and better plan more than probable.’

‘Am I to be made acquainted with it?’ asked Emmeran, without any great demonstration of interest.

‘I do not see why you should not,’ answered his brother; ‘I have long discovered that the most foolish act of my life was breaking off my engagement with Hilda, and may as well tell you plainly that on having ascertained that O’More had been upwards of three years absent without keeping up any sort of communication with his wife and notoriously leading a very gay life in Vienna, I came here for the purpose of advising Hilda to obtain a divorce from him, and then intended to

urge her to fulfil her late father's and aunt's wishes by consenting to a marriage with me.'

'Sigmund, are you mad?'

'By no means; perfectly sane, I assure you. Men and women marry from pique or to punish one another every day. You may, however, imagine my astonishment and disappointment when, on my arrival, I found the scapegrace himself here, and, though evidently doing penance for his sins, apparently pretty certain of absolution! When I left you last night, I had fully resolved to take Doris——'

'I suppose,' said Emmeran, interrupting him, 'you mean that you had some, perhaps unfounded, hope that she might be induced to take you.'

'As you please,' said Sigmund, laughing; 'from such a charming stoic as Doris a man can submit to a moderate display of condescension. But to make a long story short, Emmeran, I consider my chances with Hilda infinitely better than with Doris, for besides the remembrance of our former long engagement, her father's wishes, and the injunction in her aunt's will, I shall have her jealousy, resentment, and desire of revenge on my side! O'More has played famously into my hand during the last four-and-twenty hours, and has just crowned his misdeeds by going off publicly with Madame de Bereny!'

‘Impossible!’ cried Emmeran, starting up; ‘this is some mistake—some misunderstanding.’

‘None whatever,’ answered Sigmund; ‘I saw the fair Hungarian descending the stairs leaning, or rather hanging, on his arm; she seems one of those women who are bewitchingly helpless when men like O’More come in their way; she allowed him absolutely to lift her into the carriage, after which he handed in the *femme de chambre* as if she had been a maid of honour—you know that’s his way—and then for propriety’s sake, I suppose, seemed very much inclined to mount the box, or otherwise dispose of himself outside, until a small very white hand was extended that drew him like a loadstone into the interior—and off they went!’

‘And who,’ asked Emmeran, uneasily, ‘who is to tell this to Hilda?’

‘She knows it already,’ answered Sigmund, ‘but I have not yet heard how she bears it, for I only saw Doris.’

‘And what did Doris say?’ asked Emmeran.

‘She informed me, with the most perfect composure, that Frank had received a letter from Colonel Bereny requesting him to take his wife to Meran and establish her in comfortable lodgings there; and then she added, that she feared they had scarcely a chance of seeing him again for

some time as his leave of absence had so nearly expired.'

'Oh, then it's all right,' said Emmeran; 'and Hilda has been made to understand that Frank could not well refuse to escort the wife of his colonel to Meran if requested to do so.'

'You may believe that if you like,' rejoined Sigmund, smiling ironically, 'but I know better what Hilda thinks and feels on this subject. She allowed me to speak in very strong terms of this husband of hers to-day, and had he not interrupted us, I should have pointed out how easily her marriage in Ulm could be annulled, and recommended her to think seriously of a separation; but it was as well I said nothing, for you who have studied law during some of the best years of your life, can explain to her all about Protestant divorces far better than I can. Give me your assistance on this occasion, Emmeran, and I cease at once to be your rival with Doris.'

'I don't at all fear your rivalry,' answered Emmeran imperturbably. 'I know and understand Doris so thoroughly, that the moment you told me she had refused you at Westenried, I felt convinced she would do so here also; for what has since occurred to make her change her opinion of you? Of Hilda I am not so sure; violent love is said to turn into violent hatred sometimes,

and, though it is difficult to imagine such a thing——’

‘Oh, not at all,’ cried Sigmund, interrupting him, ‘I can understand the change perfectly; and Hilda has been deserted and neglected with an ostentation very likely to irritate a proud and passionate girl beyond endurance. I tell you, Emmeran, I only require time to make her discard him!’

‘Don’t be too sure of that, Sigmund.’

‘I shall not be precipitate if that be what you mean,’ answered Sigmund, ‘for the sacrifice of a few weeks—or even months if necessary, is not too much on this occasion; and, in fact, I am rather at a loss to know what to do with myself just at present.’

‘I should have supposed,’ said Emmeran, ‘that there was a good deal of occupation for you at Westenried after so long an absence.’

‘I cannot deny that,’ said Sigmund; ‘but I hate the place, and nothing is in order there since the Pallersbergs left it. By the bye I was excessively annoyed at Hilda’s establishing them at Forsteck after the insolent letter they wrote to me; and one of my first acts when I marry her will be to send them an order to decamp.’

‘You will not find it easy to obtain Hilda’s consent to that,’ said Emmeran, half-laughing;

‘she is in constant correspondence with Pallersberg, and now understands the management of her affairs perfectly. Talk to her of her rights and rents, her woods, fields, and cattle, and you will be rather astonished, I suspect.’

‘Rather say disgusted,’ cried Sigmund; ‘but I shall soon put an end to all interference on her part; and the very first thing will be to get rid of those detestable Pallersbergs.’

‘I advise you,’ said Emmeran dryly, ‘to defer proclaiming this not very laudable intention of yours until——’

‘Until what?’ asked Sigmund.

“Until the Waldering flag wave above the roof of Forsteck!”

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATAL 'NO.'

SOME weeks elapsed before Frank wrote again; when he did so, the letter was from Vienna, addressed to Doris, and urged, in the strongest terms, a removal of the family to Meran, if that place were necessary for his aunt's health, but if not, to Forsteck or Ulm, where, as the fortifications had been destroyed, there was no danger of the town being again subjected to a siege, or their being incommoded in case of a war, excepting, perhaps, occasionally by the passage of troops.

This letter Doris had instantly taken to her mother's room and left with her and Hilda for discussion, purposely returning to her tapestry-frame, near one of the windows in the drawing-room, in order to avoid giving her opinion or advice. Hilda, however, soon followed her, and throwing down the letter observed, with evident pique: 'As Frank has chosen you for correspondent, I must beg you to let him know that I do not see any necessity for leaving Innsbruck,

even in case of a war, unless he can give less vague reasons for his advice. The passage of troops will not annoy us here more than at Ulm, and Innsbruck being also unfortified we need have no apprehension of a siege; if, however, you and mama think otherwise, there is nothing to prevent you from going to Meran whenever you please.'

'Hilda,' said Doris, 'you know perfectly well that we cannot leave you here alone.'

'Why not?' she asked. 'Am I a child still? Surely when a woman has been married as long as I have she may be supposed able to take care of herself. I am sure Frank thinks so, and if you write to him will care very little about *my* refusal to comply with his request; he will be only too happy to hear from you at all events, and has evidently, for this purpose, chosen you as the permanent medium of communication between us.'

'I decline the offer,' said Doris in a low voice, as she bent over her work.

'But you cannot refuse to answer such a letter as this?'

'Scarcely,' answered Doris.

'I thought so,' cried Hilda; 'that entreating postscript for a few words from your "dear hand" is irresistible, and the "darling cousin" will "resume her office of Mentor."''

‘Hilda, what do you mean?’ asked Doris, looking up alarmed.

‘I mean,’ she answered with suppressed vehemence,—‘I mean that it is evident Frank loves you still and cares not at all for me!—I mean that I would give years of my life for such a letter from him!’

‘Years of your life,’ repeated Doris; ‘but not a few hours to Madame de Bereny!’

‘It was indeed folly to refuse that request,’ said Hilda, ‘for it only served to show him what a much more desirable and compliant wife you would have made him than I can.’

‘Am I to understand that you object to my answering his letter?’ asked Doris, rising.

‘Object!’ exclaimed Hilda passionately—‘how can I object when I have no other means of hearing of him? Rather tell him to write often and regularly!’

‘No, Hilda; Frank shall never cause disunion between us if I can prevent it. My letter will forbid his writing to me again, and contain a request that he will either correspond in future with my mother or desire his friend Pallersberg to do so more frequently.’

‘Doris, I cannot consent to any such arrangements: you know Major Pallersberg writes chiefly

about politics and literature, and only mentions Frank in the most cursory manner.'

'With that you must be satisfied for the present,' answered Doris, seating herself at the writing-table.

'Wait a moment,' said Hilda imploringly, while she laid her hand on her sister's shoulder; 'you understand, dear Doris, that I do not blame you in the least for what has happened——'

'I blame myself,' answered Doris, turning round with a flush of anger on her cheek; 'I blame myself for having ever, *ever* interfered! How can I justify so misusing my influence over Frank at Ulm? If I thought it necessary, I might have resigned; but I had no right whatever to dispose of him for life—irrevocably!'

'Not irrevocably,' cried Hilda, greatly agitated; 'write to him, Doris—tell him that I now consent to, and even desire, the divorce he proposed at Ulm. Sigmund says it can be obtained without any difficulty, and has offered to manage everything for me.'

'Is it possible you have consulted Sigmund?'

'No; but he has contrived to discover all we intended to conceal from him; I knew he would when he came here, and if I must take his advice, I suppose I had better employ him.'

'Do neither the one nor the other, Hilda; de-

pend upon it he has some hidden motive for his interference; and though I do not in the least doubt his statement that you can have your marriage annulled according to German law, I am much mistaken if divorces can be so easily obtained in England, and you would scarcely desire to be free yourself while Frank continued bound to you.'

'No—oh, no—quite the contrary!' cried Hilda; 'my sole wish was to restore him to complete freedom; if, however, this cannot be effected,' she continued, 'I can only promise to endeavour in every way to conciliate him when we meet again.'

'Why not begin at once?' asked Doris. 'Take his advice about Meran, and go there next week, as he proposes.'

'No, Doris; that would be too humiliating; you cannot expect me to follow and seek the acquaintance of the artful woman who has caused him to desert me in so open and scandalous a manner.'

'I thought,' said Doris, 'you told me you had yourself dismissed him in the very words he used to you at Ulm?'

'Well, so I did.'

'And if,' said Doris, 'if he now choose "to go where he pleases, and to do what he likes," who can blame him?'

'Not you, at all events,' cried Hilda petulantly; 'you think him faultless, and are ever ready to throw the blame of our disagreements on me. Doris!' she added, stopping for a moment at the door, towards which she had walked while speaking, 'Doris, that was an ill-starred day on which you resigned him to me!'

'Ill-starred, indeed!' repeated Doris, as her sister left the room, and then, leaning over the writing-table and supporting her head with her hand, she allowed bitter regret for the first time to mix itself with the painful retrospect that drew large, reluctant tears to her eyes. '*He*, at least, has never reproached me,' she murmured; 'and yet he might well have done so lately, instead of asking me to plead his cause with this passionate and jealous sister of mine. I must not, however, despair or become weary of making efforts to reconcile them to each other—it is the only atonement I can ever make him.'

She drew a sheet of paper towards her and wrote 'Dear Frank,'—then paused to think how she could best soften Hilda's refusal to leave Innsbruck—looked up, and perceived Emmeran advancing towards her from her mother's room.

'I am the bearer of a message from Hilda,' he said earnestly; 'she begs you will forgive all she

said just now, and desire Frank to write to you as often as he can or will.'

Doris shook her head.

'I am afraid she has been very unreasonable and unkind,' he continued; 'but she seemed really penitent, and told me your patience with her was perfectly incomprehensible.'

'Her words were less so,' said Doris, 'and my correspondence with Frank must end in this letter.'

'I warned her not to employ me as emissary,' observed Emmeran; 'for any one and every one can say "no" to me without difficulty. I am quite accustomed to the odious little word, and now never expect to hear anything else when I make a request.'

'To others, perhaps,' said Doris, smiling; 'but not to me, for I cannot remember having often said "no" to you, Emmeran.'

'Many and many a time,' he answered; 'but you have forgotten your refusals because they were of no importance to you. I can, however, recollect a "no" of some years since that made a fatal impression on me.'

'You excite my curiosity,' she said, pushing away her writing-paper; 'where did I pronounce this fatal "no" ?'

'At Westenried.'

'But when?'

'On the last Holy-eve we spent there.'

'Don't remind me of that dreadful evening.'

'It was before it had become dreadful,' said Emmeran, 'that I asked you to let me look in your magic mirror, or whatever you called it, and you refused at once, without a moment's hesitation.'

'I believe,' said Doris, 'I should do the same now, and for the same reason.'

'Of course you would,' answered Emmeran, gravely. 'It is only during occasional moments of infatuation that I ever suppose anything else possible.'

She did not appear to hear him, but continued, musingly—'You know, Emmeran, at that time the recollection of what Hilda imagined she had seen in the vaults a year previously, and the curious circumstance of the ring found there being required for her marriage, had made an unpleasant impression on us all; but I believe you never heard that Mina, when alarmed by the flickering of the blue lights, fancied she saw her own corpse beneath the water of the lake. Now, though, as well as I can recall her words, the idea had presented itself to her often before, and I am quite convinced that the subsequent events would have

occurred whether we had looked in the glass or not, yet you can understand my dislike to everything of the kind in future.'

'Perfectly,' answered Emmeran. 'No one is free from a certain portion of superstition; it lies deep in the mind of all, and is at best but dormant in that of the most rational. At Westenried, however, I thought, and indeed still think, that the chief cause of your refusal was a suspicion that I might attempt to place the glass so that I should have seen your face reflected in it, and perhaps have even cheated you into seeing mine!'

Doris did not choose to understand. 'I have no doubt,' she said, smiling, 'that your plan to turn my pretended witchcraft into ridicule was well devised; but I had had more than enough of blue lights and vaults, and believe, that even seeing your well-known face and smart new uniform under such circumstances would have been anything rather than agreeable to me.'

'I believe you,' said Emmeran; 'and can even recollect that when we met at dinner on that memorable day you did not bestow a single glance on the smart new uniform, though I had the folly to expect and wish you to do so.'

'You are jesting, of course,' said Doris.

'Not at all, I assure you.'

Doris shook her head, and laughed incredu-

lously. 'I have since then had opportunities enough of becoming acquainted with your uniform,' she said, 'and can only hope you will pardon my saying that I prefer seeing you in any other dress.'

'Indeed!' he exclaimed, with a look of such surprise and disappointment that she added:—

'I mean you look better in a morning or evening coat, or even a shooting-jacket. You know you were never intended for a soldier, and it is very evident that the uniform bores and the accoutrements embarrass you!'

'Very true,' he answered; 'but I thought you had a great predilection for military trappings, that is,' he added, on perceiving her look of astonishment, 'I supposed you liked the profession of which they are the outward sign; and in fact, Doris, I should never have entered the army if I had not thought it the best or perhaps only means of finding favour in your eyes.'

'Nonsense, Emmeran! you cannot make me believe that you gave up your former pursuits, and changed all your habits and occupations on my account?'

'Yet I did so, and without regret as yet, Doris; for has not chance so favoured me that I have enjoyed your society for more than two years without interruption?'

Doris began to perceive that there was something more than 'habit' in Emmeran's regard for her; she even felt a sort of certainty that he was devoted to her in a manner that ought not to be trifled with. 'A poor recompense, Emmeran, for such loss of time,' she said, a good deal embarrassed; 'and I now scarcely know whether I ought or ought not to give you the assurance that I have no sort of predilection for the army as a profession, nor for soldiers——in general.'

'Nor,' he observed, 'nor will you care to hear that I shall probably return to my former occupation as soon as the war is over, for I am now convinced that my time has indeed been lost—I must however say agreeably lost—here; and though I may not, as you say, be soldierlike, I am at least so much a soldier at heart that instead of remaining longer in garrison here, I shall endeavour to exchange into another regiment in which I am more likely to see something of active service.'

'I hope you will not do any such thing,' cried Doris, hastily, and feeling at the moment very strongly how necessary "habit" had made Emmeran's society to her; 'we shall miss you dreadfully.'

'Very flattering for me if you do,' he answered, 'and I am even selfish enough to hope it may be the case; but while talking of myself I have for-

gotten to plead for Hilda,—do, pray, grant her request, and continue your correspondence with Frank; let her hear of, if she cannot expect to hear from him.'

'Dear Emmeran, I am really sorry to be obliged to refuse this request; but assure you I have reasons that make my correspondence with Frank quite out of the question——ask anything else——'

But Emmeran turned away in the direction of her mother's room, saying, with a faint smile, 'That he had had refusals enough for one day, and would now leave her to write her letter.'

CHAPTER VIII.

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.

BEFORE many days of the month of April had passed over, Hilda began to understand the purport of Frank's letter, and to wish she had been less determined in refusing to follow his advice. Although none but the initiated were aware of the powerful conspiracy formed by the Tiroleans to shake off a foreign yoke and return to their allegiance to their emperor, many circumstances had occurred to lead to the supposition that when the expected declaration of war became public, the peasants would take up arms and join any Austrian force sent into the country.

One evening as the Walderings were returning from a walk to Mount Isel, they perceived several groups of people standing on the banks of the Inn eagerly watching the progress of a strong plank that floated past on the surface of the water.

Sigmund and Hilda stopped and looked in the same direction.

'I had no idea,' observed the former, shrugging

his shoulders, 'that a plank swimming on the river Inn was so unusual a circumstance.'

'It is not the plank,' said Hilda; 'it is the flagstaff on it with the red streamer that attracts attention.'

'And,' suggested Sigmund, 'which will no doubt furnish the superstitious people here with a "*pendant*" to the story you have just been telling me about the bloody hand portentous of war that was lately seen on the freshly scoured table of the inn in Sarnthal.'

'But,' said Hilda, 'you will find it more difficult to give a satisfactory explanation of the red flag than the red hand. I know the hostlers of the country inns are frequently butchers, and the one at Sarnthal *may* have leaned on the table when fresh from the slaughter-house,—but the carpenter who placed the flag on that plank had certainly some hidden meaning.'

'Not,' answered Sigmund, 'not if he were a juvenile workman who, we may suppose, found a strip of red calico, or it may be a handkerchief of his grandfather's, and having nailed it either on the stick or crutch of that worthy relative, only required a strong board to complete the construction of the primitive plaything destined to excite the curiosity, fears, and hopes of the inhabitants of Innsbruck!'

Hilda shook her head. 'I cannot help thinking that Frank would have given a very different explanation of that floating flag,' she said, walking on to join her mother.

'He would most probably have declined giving any at all, if the thing really have a meaning,' muttered Sigmund, and while speaking his eye fell on a peasant-woman who had been standing close beside them.

'The less said the better,' observed the woman, turning towards him for a moment with a look of mysterious meaning, and at the same time thrusting a slip of paper into his hand.

Sigmund opened and read the words, 'It is time.' The thought instantly presented itself that he had been mistaken for Frank, and hoping to obtain some information by continuing to personate him, he looked round intending to commence a conversation; but the woman was gone, and no one in the least resembling her within sight. A peasant stood alone at no great distance still gazing after the now scarcely perceptible red flag, and Sigmund approaching him repeated in a low voice the words he had just heard, 'The less said the better.'

The man turned from the river, and seemed very naturally to expect to hear more.

'*It is time,*' continued Sigmund, emphatically.

‘Time for what?’ asked the peasant, casting a look of provoking intelligence first on the paper and then on Sigmund, who instantly perceived that a reply was expected which he could not give, and while he pretended to examine the paper he held in his hand, supposing he should find some other notice on it, the man continued with a shrewd smile and a glance westward, ‘By my watch and the setting sun it is six o’clock, and——supper-time for most people.’

‘It will not be six o’clock until to-morrow morning,’ answered Sigmund, putting the paper into his pocket and walking off, unconscious that his reply had produced a change in the expression of the peasant’s face, followed by a few hasty steps after him, that were, however, suddenly arrested when he perceived Sigmund join his brother and cousins and unhesitatingly exhibit the paper containing the three mysterious words.

Sigmund never knew that the peasant he had addressed was Joseph Speckbacher, “The Man of Rinn,” as he has since been poetically called by his biographer, and at that time the person in all Tirol most capable of giving the information he required. Speckbacher was just then endeavouring to ascertain the strength of the Innsbruck garrison, and to him the floating flag on the river, and the words “It is time,” were full of meaning ;

they told him to hasten the preparations for the insurrection, to give notice to the inhabitants of the valley of the Inn, and encouraged him to concert with his followers the plan of taking the town of Hall by surprise, which he afterwards put into execution with equal subtlety and celerity.

The movements of the Man of Rinn were, however, only indirectly of importance to the Waldेरings, though their first serious apprehensions were occasioned by the signal fires which he soon after caused to be lighted on the surrounding mountains.

One of the most remarkable circumstances in this insurrection was the inviolable secrecy observed by the thousands of initiated. The innkeepers, commencing with Andrew Hofer himself, were almost all deeply implicated; their houses during the frequent target-shooting matches served as places of assembly for the peasants, their cellars were used for the concealment of ammunition, and all injudicious outbursts of patriotism, or manifestations of disaffection to the ruling powers, which were of not unfrequent occurrence in such places, were alike supposed to be the effects of the Tirolean wine, which at that time the peasants drank in amazing quantities.

At length the long-expected declaration of war on the part of Austria was made known in Inns-

bruck by the distribution of innumerable proclamations, printed in Vienna, and smuggled in some unaccountable manner into the country. Fires then blazed at nightfall on the highest mountains, the alarm bells of the neighbouring villages pealed without intermission, and crowds of peasants assembling on the roads and on the heights round Innsbruck, successfully forced the Bavarian pickets from the Martin'swand, Gallwiese, and Mount Isel into the town. General Kinkel and Colonel Dietfurt posted cannon on the bridges, and took every possible means with their limited garrison to quell the revolt, but with the exception of some wealthy Jews and a few burghers they had no friends in the town, and found it impossible to prevent constant communication with the insurgents.

Sigmund entered his aunt's apartment late on the evening of this day; he brought a musket, a sword, and a brace of pistols with him, and declared his intention of remaining in their drawing-room during the night, as it was impossible to tell what might occur. The central position of their house enabled Emmeran to look in occasionally and tell them what was going on, but after daylight they saw him no more, and Sigmund was at length sent out to procure information.

It was still early when he returned in a state of

great excitement, and informed them that thousands of peasants were swarming in all directions towards the town, and that the Bavarian cannoniers had been little else than targets for the Tirolean riflemen, who aimed at them deliberately as if at a shooting match. 'The rebels,' he continued, 'have got possession of the bridges, and are now forcing their way through the triumphal arch and every other entrance to the town; our men are fighting like lions, but they must be overpowered by such numbers.'

'Is there no one,' cried Doris, 'to explain this to General Kinkel? Surely in a case of this kind any garrison may capitulate without disgrace.'

'Dietfurt will not listen to any terms,' answered Sigmund, 'and was furious because Kinkel proposed evacuating the town if allowed to retreat unmolested. Some well-disposed citizens made their appearance near one of the bridges and attempted to procure at least a short cessation of hostilities; but the peasants have no respect for flags of truce: they rushed down the Hotting hill, took the bridge and cannon by storm, disarmed our men, and chased the citizens before them into the town.'

'And was no further effort made?' asked Doris.

'Yes,' he answered; 'in the Town-house, where I have just been, I hoped they might come to

terms, but the insurgents insist on the garrison laying down their arms, and that of course is not to be thought of for an instant. If you have no objection to my leaving you,' he continued, buckling on the sword and filling his pockets with ammunition, 'I should like to join Dietfurt and have a shot at these traitors.'

'If you go,' said Doris, 'I hope it will be to Emmeran. Think how dreadfully revolting such scenes and deeds must be to him——he ought never to have been a soldier!'

At that moment they heard cavalry galloping through the street, and Sigmund rushed to the window; he turned round however directly, for the steady tread and regular platoon fire of infantry became audible in another direction.

'We are in the thick of it,' he cried, throwing open the doors leading to the back of the house; 'our men must be marching towards the hospital.'

They all followed, and required no explanation to make them understand that the peasants had obtained possession of the hospital, and were firing from the windows, and rushing tumultuously from the gateway to attack the advancing troops.

A desperate conflict ensued almost beneath their windows, for the back of the house was only separated from the road by a small court-yard containing a pump and some sheds for wood. They

could see distinctly the faces of the combatants, and how well known to them were those of the officers who now courageously led on their men to so hopeless an attack, Colonel Dietfurt the foremost of all, apparently in a state of frenzy!

The terrified spectators at the windows of the Waldering apartments soon saw and followed with harrowing interest but one actor in this frightful scene ;—it was Emmeran—not the quiet, thoughtful, low-voiced man they had hitherto known, whose accoutrements were generally such evident incumbrances to him ;—the sword he so gladly put aside whenever an opportunity offered was now brandished above his head, his eyes flashed, and Dietfurt himself was not more daringly reckless, more passionately eloquent in urging his men to charge. Though wounded he still continued to advance, until a ball in the side made him sink on one knee, while a stream of blood poured from his lips ; but when some peasants approached to take him prisoner, he started again to his feet and continued the combat until overpowered by numbers and weakness he sank on the ground.

By this time Sigmund, who had rushed from the room and sprang down the stairs, was already in the court impetuously opening the small door of communication with the road ; the others followed in wild alarm, and Doris would perhaps have

pressed after him among the combatants, had he not almost immediately reappeared holding in his arms the apparently lifeless body of his brother.

‘Shut the yard-door!’ shouted the proprietor of the house, who was leaning out of one of the upper windows; ‘shut the door, or we shall have the peasants in here firing from the windows of our rooms.’

His words seemed about to be verified, for a number of men pressed hard upon Sigmund, whose arms, however, were no sooner at liberty than he drew his sword, turned upon them, and, forcing them back, pursued them into the midst of the combat. The yard-door was instantly closed by eager hands; but Hilda sprang forward and again threw it wide open, exclaiming resolutely: ‘I will not have him shut out; let him return to us.’

And even while she was speaking Sigmund staggered back and fell senseless at her feet.

Then the door was firmly bolted; and the clashing of swords and loud report of firearms continued without, while the terrified inmates of the yard made vain attempts to restore the wounded brothers to consciousness.

‘He is dead, quite dead, Hilda!’ said the Countess Waldering, as she raised the hair from Sigmund’s forehead and pointed to a double wound

there; 'it is useless trying to revive him.' And she turned to Emmeran, who showed some signs of returning life.

Doris was sitting on the ground supporting Emmeran's head on her knee, and bathing his temples with cold water from a tub that had been placed near her. His uniform was covered with blood, and so was his sword, which he still grasped tightly, struggling convulsively whenever anyone attempted to take it from him, and causing a fresh loss of blood that immediately produced renewed faintness.

'Oh, leave it in his hand!' said Doris, 'and send some one to the next house; perhaps the surgeon who lives there is at home, and could come to us.'

'I cannot allow the house door to be opened just yet,' said the landlord, who was now standing beside her; 'the street is too full of riflemen.'

'*You* have nothing to fear from them, Mr. Hartmann,' interposed Doris, indignantly.

'No, mademoiselle, for myself nothing, but for my cellar everything. I can, however, send up to the roof of the house, and have no doubt that most of our neighbours are assembled on the leads there; it is not even improbable that we may find the surgeon himself among them; and I must say, when things take this turn, it is a far

better and safer place up there than in a yard such as this.'

'Hilda,' said Doris, with an expressive glance upwards; 'he will come instantly if you go yourself for him.'

Hilda immediately ran into the house, followed by Mr. Hartmann, who begged her to wait for him, as she could not possibly open the door on the roof alone; while his wife, coming forward with an embarrassed air, 'hoped that Count Emmeran's uniform would be taken off' as soon as possible, as it might place her and her husband in a very unpleasant position; the blood-stained sword alone,' she said, 'would be sufficient to provoke the peasants to plunder her house should they now force their way into it.'

Doris thought this exaggeration; but she bent down her head and whispered, 'Give me your sword, dear Emmeran.'

He evidently not only had heard, but also understood, what had been said, for he slowly opened his eyes, and when he perceived her hand extended towards the offending weapon, his fingers relaxed their grasp of it, and clasped instead the small cold hand that disarmed him, and which he feebly raised and pressed on the wound in his side, from which the blood still flowed profusely.

‘Thank goodness,’ said her mother, ‘he can see and hear again; so, though perhaps too weak to move, I think if I were to send down a mattress, he might be carried up to Frank’s room even before Surgeon Manhart comes here.’

‘I think so, too,’ answered Doris; ‘and the sooner we remove him from this place the better.’

Her mother left the yard, followed by the assembled servants and other inmates of the house; and Emmeran instantly seemed aware that they were alone: ‘Doris,’ he said, in a scarcely audible voice, and she bent down her head towards him—‘Doris!——I fear all is lost——I saw Dietfurt fall, and——’ here he stopped, and she perceived the paleness of death again spread over his features as his eyes fell on the outstretched rigid form of his brother. With great effort he raised himself on his elbow, and panted: ‘Go to him, Doris——do not neglect him for me——I—I am quite well now, and——he may be only badly wounded——poor fellow——’

A violent attempt to rise from his recumbent position produced a return of weakness, followed by a swoon, from which he only completely recovered when the surgeon began to probe his wounds.

CHAPTER IX.

UP WITH THE EAGLE!

WOMEN are frequently violent politicians in *words*, but fortunately very seldom in *deeds*, and therefore it will scarcely surprise the reader to hear that Doris's feeling of exultation at the complete success of the Tirolean insurrection, was almost turned into depression when, added to Sigmund's death and Emmeran's dangerous wounds, she heard of the number of Bavarians who had lost their lives in the course of a few hours. That most of the officers who had fallen were personally known to her only served to increase her dejection, and it was remarkable that Hilda listened at first with more interest than Doris could to the details given by their landlady of the street combats and other events that had taken place.

'Before eleven o'clock,' said Madame Hartmann, pertinaciously addressing Doris in expectation of complete sympathy,—'before eleven o'clock the enemy were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners!'

‘And Colonel Dietfurt?’ asked Hilda; ‘Is there any hope of his recovery?’

‘People say his wounds are not absolutely mortal,’ answered Madame Hartmann; ‘but he has got a fever, and is delirious; they took him to the hospital, and are obliged to keep him in his bed by force: it is curious that when he saw the wounded peasants there he immediately asked them who had been their leader; and though they assured him they had had none, he said that he knew better, and had seen him mounted on a white horse several times during the combat.’

‘Delirium, of course!’ observed Hilda.

‘I suppose so,’ said Madame Hartmann; ‘but the people imagine it must have been St. Jacob, the patron saint of Innsbruck,* and they now suppose themselves quite invincible! Hartmann says it would be a very good thing if they had a visible commander, and he thinks they will choose Hofer, or Speckbacher, or perhaps Teimer.’

‘Who is Teimer?’ asked Hilda.

‘One likely to be of importance in times like these,’ she answered; ‘and fortunately both he and Baron Hormayer were at the University with Hartmann, and are friends of his, which secures us a couple of powerful protectors in case of need.’

* Fact.

Teimer gave up his studies to enter the militia, and has seen a good deal of service one way or other; they say he is also an emissary of the Archduke's and a friend of Andrew Hofer's. I had no wish to have him in my house the last time he was in Innsbruck,' she added, laughing; 'but he would be a very welcome guest just now.'

'I don't think,' said Hilda, 'that under these circumstances Mr. Hartmann need have had any apprehension about his cellars, or you about the presence of our poor wounded cousin; but what may those expect who have no friends to defend them?—the Bavarian families residing here, for instance?'

'Well, I don't think they need be uneasy,' she answered. 'From the peasants they have nothing to fear, though I cannot answer for the mob of the town, you know. I believe some parties of them have already commenced plundering the warehouses of the Jews on pretence of recovering the plate and altar ornaments of the secularized monasteries; and there is no denying that the cellars of the wine merchants are all more or less in danger; so we can only hope that Marshal Chasteler and the Austrians will soon be here, as thousands and thousands of peasants are still

marching into the town, and no one knows where they will take up their quarters.'

Just then her husband came home, and informed the hastily assembled inmates of the house that his friend Major Teimer had arrived in Innsbruck, and as imperial commissioner taken the command of the town.

'I hope, Hartmann, you asked him to come and stay with us?' said his wife, in a sudden paroxysm of hospitality.

'Of course; but he has so much to do trying to preserve order, that we have little chance of seeing him for some time. There are the wounded on both sides to be taken care of, the prisoners and Bavarian functionaries to be protected,—in short, so many arrangements to be made, that it was quite a relief to him when the peasants were induced to go in search of a wooden eagle that has been discovered in the Franciscan church, and afterwards amused themselves shouting, "Long live our Emperor, Franz!"'

'And Marshal Chasteler, Hartmann, and the Austrians? when may we expect to see them?'

'We hoped they would have been here this evening,' he answered, with some embarrassment; 'but——but——'

‘Has anything happened?’ asked his wife, anxiously; ‘the French perhaps——’

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘we have just heard from a scout that the French under General Bisson are marching towards us, and there is little doubt of the truth of his assertion, for the alarm bells are already pealing in the direction indicated.’

‘Oh, dear! oh, dear!’ she cried; ‘and I thought we had gained such a victory! Perhaps the peasants will go off now and leave us to the mercy of the French!’

‘No danger of that,’ said her husband, ‘for our people feel that they have gone too far to recede, and are already making preparations for the reception of the enemy;—barricades have been erected at the triumphal arch,—the streets in that direction are all blocked up, and every house and garden fit for defence will be occupied by our riflemen.’

‘I wish the Austrians were here, and the fighting over,’ said Madame Hartmann.

‘So do I; but as there is no danger for the present, you may go to bed, and sleep securely until morning.’

The advice was good; but who could sleep with such noise in the streets at night, such incessant pealing of alarm bells after daybreak?

Doris, Hilda, and their mother were frequently

in Emmeran's room, and tried to beguile the weary, sleepless hours by informing him of all that was going on in the town. They were enabled to do so without difficulty, as Major Teimer was actually in the house with them, at first as guest, and some hours afterwards as fugitive, the people having begun to doubt the authenticity of his credentials, and refusing to obey any further orders given by him.

‘This is very unfortunate,’ observed Doris, ‘for his orders and arrangements were exceedingly judicious, and I fear that even Tiroleans may commit excesses if long without a leader.’

‘That is very probable,’ said Hilda. ‘It is a pity they could not continue the worship of the Imperial Eagle a little longer—it was a harmless amusement!’

‘You have not told me about that,’ said Emmeran, looking towards Doris.

‘I thought—I feared—you might not like to hear anything so fanatically Austrian.’

‘I like to hear everything, without reserve,’ he answered.

‘In that case,’ said Doris, ‘I ought to have told you the meaning of the noise in the street this afternoon when you desired me to look out of the window, for just then the people were carrying about in triumph a gigantic eagle made of carved

wood that some one had discovered in the Franciscan church. The cries of "Vivat" that you heard were addressed to this symbol of Austria, which after having been paraded in procession through the principal streets, was at last placed with enthusiastic shouts over the gate of the post-office.*

'Well,' he said, on perceiving that she paused; 'is that all?'

'Not quite, for the ladder that had been used for this purpose was held in its place by the peasants, who ascended it one after the other to embrace and kiss the eagle; and when any one remained longer than the time allowed, a jealous murmur reminded him that others were waiting to take his place; but I dare say you think all this very contemptible?'

'By no means,—genuine enthusiasm is never contemptible. Pray go on!'

'Madame Hartmann assured me that many of those present had tears in their eyes when an old man who had fought bravely all the morning threw his arms round the eagle, and exclaimed, "Hurrah, old fellow, your feathers have grown again!"*

'You need not have hesitated to tell me all

* Fact.

this, Doris,' observed Emmeran; 'none of us can now doubt the patriotism of the Tiroleans or their determination to remain Austrian; but they are probably not aware that the small garrison they overpowered yesterday morning are in daily expectation of French troops, who are on the march from Italy, and these may reach Innsbruck before the Austrians.'

'There is no doubt of that,' said Hilda, 'for the French under General Bisson are now on Mount Isel, and it is to assemble the peasants that they have been ringing the alarm bells so incessantly.'

'Some of our troops must be with Bisson,' cried Emmeran, trying to raise himself from his pillow.

'Major Teimer only spoke of the French——' began Doris.

'No matter; I think if I could see the surgeon again he would allow me to get up.'

'He would not,' said Doris, 'for he told me you were very likely to suffer from fever, and had no chance of being able to leave your room for weeks. You heard him say so, mama?'

'Yes,' answered her mother; 'and I also heard him recommend perfect tranquillity and the avoidance of all mental excitement; but this last direction has been altogether forgotten, I think.'

‘Very true,’ said Doris; ‘it is unpardonable our discussing such subjects in this room.’

‘Oh, my dear aunt!’ cried Emmeran, beseechingly; ‘do not condemn me to lie here listening to the shouts in the streets, the pealing of bells, and firing of signals, without being told what is going on——if you keep me in ignorance I shall inevitably become delirious!’

‘Well, you shall hear all we can ascertain on condition that you remain quiet; and remember that happen what will you must resign yourself to be our prisoner in this room until your wounds are healed.’

‘Be it so,’ answered Emmeran, submissively; ‘I promise to listen with perfect stoicism to whatever you may henceforward tell me.’

A servant just then entered the room to say that Mr. Hartmann requested to see her.

‘Doris,’ said Emmeran, but without moving or even looking at her, ‘are the rebels——that is, the insurgents——I mean the peasants——’

‘Or the patriots,’ interposed Doris; ‘but you may call them what you please now!’

‘Are they still in Innsbruck?’ he asked.

‘Yes.’

‘And where have they been quartered?’

‘Some in the houses, but by far the greater

number in the streets, and the fields and gardens beyond the town.'

'Have they obtained any advantages elsewhere?'

'Yes; I believe Speckbacher has taken Hall by surprise, and Hofer gained a victory near Sterzing.'

'There will soon be some hard fighting,' said Emmeran, 'for Bisson is evidently surrounded by your——patriots, and will have to force a passage through the town.'

'Or——capitulate,' said his aunt, who just then returned to the room. 'Major Teimer seems to think this inevitable; and actually, some hours ago, procured an open letter from General Kinkel to this Frenchman, recommending him to send some one to ascertain the state of affairs here, the force and enthusiasm of the peasants, and the utter impossibility of avoiding a capitulation.'

'Bisson is not likely to pay much attention to a letter so evidently written under compulsion,' observed Emmeran.

'Don't be too sure of that,' said his aunt, 'for both a French and a Bavarian officer of high rank were immediately sent here, and Major Teimer has thought it necessary to retain them in the town.'

‘As prisoners?’ cried Emmeran, ‘impossible!’

‘Well, I don’t myself think it is right,’ she continued, ‘but Major Teimer says that “necessity has no laws,” and he has sent back an aide-de-camp or soldier who was with them; since then there has been some skirmishing, enough he thinks to convince the French of their dangerous position, and he is now going to Wiltau to propose a capitulation.’

‘Doris,’ whispered Emmeran, ‘if there were no Bavarians under Bisson’s command, I shouldn’t mind his having to capitulate. Napoleon only gave us Tirol in order to secure a free passage for his armies to and from Italy, and as he has not allowed us to reserve enough troops to keep possession of the country, he may take the consequences!’

‘I am glad you begin to understand him,’ she answered.

‘By the bye,’ said her mother, after a pause, ‘Mr. Hartmann has just made an extraordinary request; it seems that General Bisson obstinately refuses to confer with any one excepting an Austrian officer, and as Major Teimer has no uniform here, Mr. Hartmann thought that perhaps we could lend him one of Frank’s.’

‘What an idea!’ cried Hilda indignantly, ‘and for such a purpose, too!’

‘My dear Hilda, the chances are that if Frank were here he would put on his uniform and go himself to Wiltau! As it was, I could only regret that there was none to lend; so Major Teimer has borrowed one belonging to a pensioned staff-officer, who however is, unfortunately, a tall corpulent man, while Major Teimer is small and slight.’ *

‘At any other time,’ said Hilda, ‘and under any other circumstances, I really could laugh at such a masquerade.’

‘I don’t think General Bisson will be at all inclined to laugh,’ answered her mother, ‘nor is Major Teimer at all a man likely to provoke laughter; he jested himself about the uniform, but said if it assisted him to compel the French to capitulate, it was all he required.’

‘At all events,’ said Hilda, ‘I am glad that Frank’s uniform is safe in my wardrobe.’

‘So he had one with him when he was here,’ observed her mother, a good deal surprised.

‘Yes,’ answered Hilda; ‘and forgot it in his hurry to leave us!’

‘It is fortunate I did not know it,’ continued her mother, ‘for your refusing to lend it might have given offence, which is better avoided at all times, and very especially at present.’

‘My dear mother, it would have been of very little importance, for I am convinced we shall have the French in the town a few hours hence.’

‘If so,’ interposed Doris, ‘they will enter it as prisoners!’

‘Whatever may happen,’ said their mother, ‘I am sure you will agree with me in thinking that the expression of hopes or fears, triumph or despondency, ought to be avoided by us, in consideration that what gives satisfaction to one must cause disappointment to the other; and, at all events, I trust that regard for Emmeran will induce you to refrain from such discussions in this room for some time at least.’

‘No, no, by no means!’ cried Emmeran eagerly. ‘I should be very sorry if my presence imposed any sort of restraint on either of my cousins, as it would serve to make them avoid my room. I like to hear both sides of the question, and particularly desire to have an account of all that occurs at Wiltau from my bitterest enemy—from Doris herself!’

‘But the doctor’s directions, Emmeran——’ began his aunt.

‘I know what they were,’ he answered, ‘but am perfectly convinced that no tranquillity, mental or bodily, would now do me so much good as a long conversation with you about various things

that are making me anxious and restless. Sit down beside me, dear aunt, and do not again leave me alone to work myself into a fever, as I did yesterday.'

While she seated herself in the chair to which he pointed, Doris and Hilda walked through the open doors of the adjoining rooms until they reached a window with a small stone balcony, on which they stepped to look up and down the deserted street.

'I wish we were in some other part of the town,' observed Hilda, 'for we can see nothing here.'

'I think we saw more than enough yesterday,' answered Doris; 'that scene at the gate of the hospital, and Sigmund's death, I shall never be able to forget.'

'Nor I,' said Hilda; 'it was dreadful to witness, but we have the consolation of knowing that Emmeran rivalled Colonel Dietfurt in courage, and that Sigmund fell in the performance of a noble act—I am afraid I must say the only one of his life!'

'Hilda!'

'I mean what I say, Doris; his death was as chivalrous as his life was base and unprincipled.'

'Let the recollection of his faults be buried with him,' said Doris; 'let us forgive as we hope to be forgiven.'

‘Be it so,’ said Hilda; ‘I never knew how treacherous and unscrupulous he was until yesterday morning, when on this balcony, standing where you are now, he spoke to me, perhaps for the first time in his life, wholly without reserve.’

‘I think I know when that occurred,’ said Doris; ‘was it not just before he left us for the last time to obtain information? I saw directly that something was wrong, and even suspected what he had said to you.’

‘No, Doris, you could not imagine anything so perfidious.’

‘Yes, I can, Hilda; for since the day you told me he had proposed obtaining a divorce for you, and I perceived he had even ventured to urge you to consent, there could be little doubt about the motives that induced him to visit us and remain so long in Innsbruck.’

‘And I only thought of *you*!’ said Hilda; ‘it would have been so natural his making another overture.’

‘Perhaps so,’ answered Doris, ‘but in that case he would never have given himself so much trouble to irritate you against Frank.’

Here they heard the distant report of a rifle, then another, and another, until they came in the quick succession of sharp skirmishing.

‘I hate the sound of that slow firing,’ observed

Hilda, 'and especially those single rifle shots,—they denote the deliberate aiming of your Tirolean patriots, and every bullet takes a life!'

Doris did not like the idea suggested, and seemed inclined to leave the balcony.

'And I must say,' continued Hilda, 'that if Frank was aware of this impending insurrection, he might have been more explicit both in words and letters.'

'I think,' replied Doris, 'he both said and wrote as much as he could venture to do under the circumstances—certainly enough to have induced any one but you to leave Innsbruck!'

'My dear Doris, I did not understand half what he meant until yesterday, or I should have strongly urged, instead of merely proposing, that you and my mother should leave me here.'

'That was out of the question, Hilda; but since poor Emmeran has been so badly wounded, we rejoice in your wilfulness, which, of course, was encouraged by a consciousness of having friends on both sides.'

'I will not deny that the certainty of protection was a great relief to my mind, as far as you were concerned,' said Hilda; 'but, for my part, I should, at all events, have remained here, and for a thoroughly selfish motive—the wish to see Frank again.'

‘Do you suppose there is any chance of his returning here?’ asked Doris.

‘I may hope so,’ answered Hilda; ‘for he told me soon after his arrival that, if things turned out as he expected, he should most probably be in Innsbruck again before spring was over. Taking it, therefore, for granted that he was even then aware of the probability of this insurrection, it is evident that, if Austria gain the advantage in this struggle, Frank will come here.’

‘I hope he may,’ said Doris, stepping into the room, but lingering beside the glass-door, while she added, ‘I wish he were here now, and in Major Teimer’s place, compelling the French to capitulate.’

‘I think, instead of capitulating, they are marching into the town,’ said Hilda; ‘for the firing has ceased, and I hear distinctly the sound of distant music.’

‘It may be the peasants——’ began Doris.

‘No,’ rejoined Hilda; ‘it is good military music, and not the fifes and drums, violins and Jews’-harps, that we heard yesterday when the Tiroleans were celebrating their triumph.’

Doris listened, and her countenance fell.

‘The French are marching into the town,’ repeated Hilda, in a subdued voice; ‘this is not what Frank expected, and I could—almost—wish it were otherwise!’

And in fact it was otherwise; for the French then marching into Innsbruck were prisoners, and the cheerful military music wafted on the south wind towards the town was compulsory! the bands of the captured regiments having been ordered to enliven with their best marches the triumph of the Tiroleans.

A few hours later, the most minute particulars of all that had occurred became known, and nowhere more accurately than in the house of which the Walderings were inmates. Having heard Mr. Hartmann's perhaps exaggerated account of the scene enacted at Wiltau, Hilda and Doris felt alike unwilling to be the first to communicate such intelligence to Emmeran, and requested their mother to tell him of the capitulation in the best way she could devise.

Emmeran heard her without interruption. 'This is a great humiliation for the French,' he observed, as she ceased speaking, 'a far greater than the surrender in Spain last year—Dupont had at least a regular army before him, and not a swarm of half-armed peasants!'

'My dear Emmeran, you must take into consideration the number of the peasants here, and—their rifles.'

'I have reason to do so,' he answered; 'but I am glad Dietfurt did not; for I would rather be

lying here, crippled as I now am, than have yielded without firing a shot. Even my poor brother's death cannot make me think otherwise.'

'I shall not attempt to dispute the point with you, Emmeran; but you must forgive my rejoicing in a capitulation that has saved so many lives. As, however, soldiers have their own code of laws, perhaps you will be glad to hear that the Bavarians, under General Bisson, wanted to force their way through the town, and were in despair at the inopportune absence of their colonel.'

'Where was he?' asked Emmeran.

'In Innsbruck. He and a Frenchman of equal rank were the officers detained here as prisoners yesterday.'

'I remember you telling me,' said Emmeran; 'but I had no idea at the time that one of them was so well known to me. Can it, however, be possible that Bisson made no attempt to come to terms with this Major Teimer?'

'Of course he made repeated efforts,' she answered. 'He promised to pay for everything he required in the town (a great concession for a French general), and only demanded a free passage for his troops, to enable them without delay to join their Emperor at Augsburg. Major Teimer's answer was, that there was no alternative—they must lay down their arms and become

prisoners of war. The General even proposed marching, with both arms and ammunition following in baggage-waggons—in vain: Major Teimer was inexorable; and the moment he turned away in displeasure, a signal was given, and the Tirolese fire recommenced. I imagine it must have been very effective, for even the French grenadiers showed symptoms of insubordination; and when the peasants pressed forward, the officers surrounded the General and began to insist on surrender, their anxiety for a capitulation and horror of the mass of wildly-shouting riflemen being so great, that two of them actually signed their names *before* General Bisson!’*

‘Poor man!’ said Emmeran, glancing towards the door, where Doris and Hilda were now standing; ‘even Doris would pity him did she know what awaits *him* in his first interview with Napoleon, and the court-martial that will inevitably succeed it.’

‘I do pity him,’ said Doris, coming forward; ‘so much so that, as far as General Bisson is personally concerned, I could not enjoy Major Teimer’s triumphant recital.’

‘For my part,’ said Hilda, ‘I have taken an inveterate dislike to that Major Teimer; he seemed,

* Fact.

even by his own account, to have had no sort of consideration for the unfortunate old General, even when he saw him tear his grey hair, and heard him, with tears of despair, lament his loss of honour and military renown.'

'Perhaps,' suggested her mother, 'Major Teimer may have felt without venturing to show his compassion. Had he been moved by his adversary's distress, he would have been obliged to grant him better terms.'

'At all events,' said Hilda, 'I am glad he did not wear Frank's uniform.'

'The capitulation is signed,' observed Emmeran, with a sigh, 'and is of such importance that I wish Frank had been here and worn his uniform himself. This act of Major Teimer's is of a description to entitle him to a Theresian cross, and I have little doubt that he will obtain it.* We cannot blame him, Hilda, for having gained a bloodless victory and done his country an essential service.'

'Oh, I am sure, Emmeran, if *you* think his conduct praiseworthy,' observed Hilda, '*I* have nothing more to say!'

'It was, by all accounts,' said her mother, 'more

* He did, and became in consequence Baron of 'Wiltau'—the name of the place where the capitulation was signed.

praiseworthy than polite ; but when General Chasteler arrives, Hilda, you will have an enemy whose chivalrous manners will give you complete satisfaction.'

'Well, Doris,' said Emmeran, 'why don't you speak? I am waiting to hear from you how the peasants used their victory.'

'Rather ask how they abused it,' interposed Hilda ; 'all the soldiers were immediately disarmed.'

'Of course they were,' said Emmeran ; 'that was one of the stipulations, I suppose.'

'Perhaps,' said Hilda, 'it was also stipulated that General Bisson was to drive into Innsbruck with Major Teimer in an open carriage, and that the bands of the regiments were to play their parade marches while on their way to imprisonment?'

'Scarcely,' answered Emmeran ; 'but one cannot expect a display of fine feeling from a crowd of triumphant peasants.'

'I think they behaved uncommonly well,' observed Doris ; 'no one was injured or insulted, although they were perfectly conscious of their strength and numbers, and had no authorized leader! One cannot on such occasions expect them to march into the town with the precision and order of a regiment of soldiers. They may

have exulted too loudly, but it was loyal exultation, and their shouts were for their Emperor and the Archduke John.'

'Not forgetting the Austrian colours and the eagle,' said Hilda. 'Only imagine, Emmeran: all the painters in Innsbruck are now employed turning the blue and white Bavarian colours into yellow and black, and carpenters have been set to work to take down the lions and exalt the eagles.'

'That is not at all surprising,' said Emmeran quietly; 'these emblems are of immense importance.'

'Indeed! then I must tell you the fate of the lion that was on the palace.'

'No, Hilda, pray don't,' cried Doris, interrupting her. 'Can you not see that these details are distressing Emmeran? the lion has been removed, and an eagle will take its place as a matter of course, and no further explanation is necessary.'

'Doris——come here,' said Emmeran, rather authoritatively, presuming perhaps on his helpless state and her undisguised sympathy.

And she came towards him, and sat down on the chair to which he pointed, and allowed him to take her hand and hold it fast, while he added, 'Tell me what they did to the lion that was on the *façade* of the palace?'

She did not answer.

‘I can make allowances for the wild exultation of peasants,’ he continued, ‘and your silence makes me perhaps imagine the insult greater than it actually was. I suppose they dashed it to the ground and trampled on it?’

‘No, no,’ cried Doris, colouring; ‘the lion was beyond the reach of any ladder they could just then procure, so—they—made a target of it, and——shot it down with their rifles!’

‘A thoroughly Tirolean idea,’ said Emmeran; ‘and if the lion must make place for the eagle, better so than otherwise.’

‘It was a tumultuous shooting-match,’ said Doris, ‘but one cannot expect refinement of feeling from peasants; we must be satisfied to find them disposed to treat the prisoners humanely, and willing to take the best possible care of the wounded.’

‘And,’ asked Emmeran, looking towards his aunt,—‘and is there any chance of a few hours’ tranquillity for the burial of the dead?’

‘There may be to-morrow,’ she answered, ‘and Sigmund’s remains can be placed in the vault of the Sarnthal family until the time come for their removal to Westenried. I have written as you desired to your father, sent to inquire about Colonel Dietfurt, and requested Madame Hart-

mann to order mourning for us during the short time the shops were open to-day. Perhaps I ought to mention that there is a report in the town that another detachment of French have been seen on the march to Innsbruck, and most of the peasants are preparing to meet them on Mount Isel.'

'A most fortunate report,' observed Hilda, 'even if it prove altogether false, for Doris herself must acknowledge that it is dangerous having so many thousands of peasants crowded together in a place like this without even a nominal commander or any one having a shadow of authority over them or others.'

'I should think so anywhere but here,' said Doris, 'but I am so thoroughly convinced of the purely patriotic motives of this revolt, that I can feel no fear of the peasants committing excesses. There is far more danger of their going to their homes before the work of emancipation is completed.'

'I hope you may be right,' said Hilda, 'and I trust you will not think me very ignoble and selfish if I also hope we may have a quiet night. I feel as if I could sleep until the day after to-morrow, were the church bells and patriots silenced for that short space of time.'

'Let us take advantage of the present tranquillity,' said her mother; 'we have at all events

talked far too much in this room to-day, and Emeran will be better without seeing any of us for some time.'

The night was as quiet as Hilda could have desired, and when the bells began to peal in the morning there was no cause for anxiety ; instead of the French, Marshal Chasteler and the Austrian troops under his command marched into the town, accompanied by an enthusiastic multitude of peasants, whose patriotism found vent in the wildest demonstrations of joy and devotion.

CHAPTER X.

WHO MADE THE WORLD AT ODDS?

DORIS, Hilda, and their mother observed what is called respect for Sigmund's memory, by putting on deep mourning and living for some time in great seclusion; they did not say so, but they knew this was merely for appearance' sake, and made no other hypocritical attempts to feign a grief they could not feel. His name was never mentioned when they were alone, and Emmeran after some time learned to avoid a topic that so evidently imposed a restraint upon relations to whom, in the intimacy of protracted illness, he was becoming daily more attached.

The alarm bells ceased to peal, firing and shouting were no longer heard in the streets, the peasants returned to their houses and worked in the fields and vineyards as quietly and unconcernedly as if their three days' insurrection had freed them for ever from a foreign yoke, while Marshal Chasteler employed himself in the organization of

the militia, or rather of the voluntary *levée en masse* of the people for the defence of the country. Fortunately there was not much to be done, the laws of Tirol making it in such cases incumbent on every man between eighteen and sixty years of age either to take up arms himself or send a substitute. These men generally supplied themselves with provisions for a fortnight, and if their absence from home exceeded that time, whatever they required was sent afterwards by their parish, women and children being most frequently used as messengers.

A more military regulation of this force was attempted, companies and battalions formed, officers appointed, and the favourite Tirolean pike-gray colour chosen for the uniform; that was not however very generally worn, the peasants preferring the costume of their valleys, which, when dark-coloured was peculiarly suitable to the mode of warfare subsequently adopted.

The Innsbruck newspaper was for some time completely filled with the Marquis Chasteler's addresses to the Tiroleans, and the Archduke John's proclamations and orders. To Doris and her mother these were deeply interesting, and one might have supposed they were the same to Hilda, as she sat carefully studying the double columns

of the very diminutive ill-printed papers, had not an occasional remark served to prove that she wished to remind her mother and sister that her view of affairs remained unchanged.

‘It seems there were 20,000 peasants here during the insurrection,’ she observed one morning to Emmeran, who had left his room for the first time, and was lying on a sofa in the drawing-room; ‘they are exceedingly praised in this proclamation of the Marquis Chasteler.’

‘And with reason,’ he answered; ‘I agree with Doris in thinking they behaved uncommonly well for men without a leader.’

‘It is a very good thing, however,’ she continued, ‘that they have all gone home again; a regular army, even of enemies, is greatly to be preferred to these patriots, with or without a leader.’

‘Especially,’ said Emmeran, ‘when the commanding enemy is such a man as Chasteler.’

‘Yes,’ said Hilda; ‘I like him because he visited Colonel Dietfurt, did all in his power to save his life, and has since had him buried with military honours; and I like him for the chivalrous act of sending back the embroidered bands of the captured colours, when he found they had been worked by our Princess Augusta.’

‘And,’ said Emmeran, smiling, ‘you like him most of all for calling here and talking of your father and Frank!’

‘I thought him very gentlemanlike,’ said Hilda.

‘So he ought to be,’ observed Emmeran, ‘for he is a descendant of a branch of the House of Lothringen, a grandee of Spain, and I know not what all besides.’

‘He calls himself a Tirolean in this proclamation,’ said Hilda, referring to the paper in her hand; ‘and mentions expressly that his country, the Netherlands, is lost to him; but that having become naturalized here, he now considers the name of Tirolean his highest title.’

‘Perhaps you will do the same some years hence,’ observed Emmeran.

Hilda looked at him inquiringly.

‘Well, if not expressly Tirolean, at least Austrian, which is the next thing to it,’ he continued; ‘for Frank will in the course of time undoubtedly add one more to the naturalized possessors of names beginning with O,—why not O’More, as well as O’Donnel, O’Reilly, O’Connor, O’Niel, and all the rest of them?’

‘I rather think,’ said Hilda, ‘that if ever Frank become naturalized in Austria, he will endeavour

to take the name of Garvagh; a permission of that kind is easily obtained on such occasions; and, when speaking to Doris of his annoyance at his father and brother having lately changed the old Irish name of "Garvagh" into Beechpark, he said he should like to adopt it as surname if an occasion presented itself.'

'Taking the name of an estate is very common in many countries,' observed Emmeran.

'Very,' said Hilda; 'and Doris tells me there are quite as many officers with names of Irish places in the Austrian army as of those beginning with O; but they sound so much more like German than English, that only people acquainted with the meaning of Irish words can detect them, and, in a couple of generations, the derivation is forgotten. Do you remember, Doris, when you were reading the army promotions some time ago, the remarkably pretty names that you told me meant in Irish, "the vale of thrushes," and "the old castle"?''

'Yes,' answered Doris; 'and the inhabitants of that old castle, which, however, is now a modern house, were very nearly related to the O'Mores of Garvagh. I recollect hearing that some great-great-uncle of ours had gone abroad, entered the service of the Emperor of Germany, married, and

become gradually so estranged from his family that his children never attempted to keep up any correspondence with their relations in Ireland. That officer is very probably a descendant of Uncle Barry's, but may never have heard the meaning of his name, and might even be incredulous if it were explained to him.'

'Well,' said Emmeran, 'Frank may purchase or otherwise obtain the right to call himself "von Garvagh," and I allow it is a name that could pass muster so well as German, that his great-grandchildren may be pardoned if they are unconscious of a relationship with the future O'Mores of Beechpark!'

Frank's great-grandchildren did not seem particularly to interest Hilda; she gathered up the papers, carried them to Emmeran, and observed that, as a Baron Hormayer had been appointed Intendant, which was probably a sort of governor of the county, and the Marquis Chasteler had gone to the south of Tirol, she supposed everything would go on quietly until the Bavarians returned to take possession of the land.

'It will be a very difficult thing for them to accomplish,' he answered. 'It is evident that the affection of the Tiroleans for their Emperor and his brothers is a sort of fanaticism; they have

heard of the Spanish guerillas too, and the riflemen here will rival if not surpass them. The inhabitants of a country in open insurrection are the most dangerous of adversaries, and if they systematically desert their villages and fly from us as they have begun to do, we shall be without provisions for our army, and have no means of obtaining any kind of information, which is of more importance than you can well imagine! I must also tell you that no one who has not been on the mountains here can form an idea of the various footpaths known only to the peasants, who can on the same day harass our army in the rear, and a few hours afterwards meet us at the entrance of one of those innumerable narrow passes that in a less mountainous country would be considered impracticable. We shall gain no laurels here, Hilda; and, to speak from experience, I should say that rifle bullets and defeat were anything rather than agreeable.'

'You have been particularly unfortunate,' said Hilda.

'I have no right to say so,' he answered, 'for had one of the bullets penetrated a little deeper, I should not have lived to complain; nevertheless, as I cannot, like the French soldier, hope that a marshal's *bâton* is in store for me, or, like

Frank, see a Theresian cross dangling perpetually within reach of my drawn sword, nothing but a perhaps false feeling of honour induces me to continue in the army. I have a sort of presentiment that I am one of those unlucky mortals who may fight until they are cripples without ever rising beyond the rank of a subaltern !’

‘I thought,’ said Doris, who was replacing the broken strings of her harp that had been untouched for several weeks,—‘I thought you had quite resolved to leave the army, even before you received the letter from your father entreating you to do so?’

‘Such is my intention,’ said Emmeran ; ‘but not until the present war is over. I hope I shall be fit for service again before long ; but I would rather be employed elsewhere than in Tirol.’

‘Why so?’ asked Hilda.

‘Because I don’t like the kind of warfare we are likely to have here ; and I cannot help admiring the loyalty of the Tiroleans to their Emperor. Our Bavarian Highlanders would protest, I hope, just as energetically, if Napoleon took it into his head to bestow them on Austria ; in short, Hilda, I feel as if I were fighting on the wrong side, which proves that Doris was right when she said some weeks ago that I had no

business to be a soldier: as such I ought to fight when commanded, without considering the justness of the cause or my own feelings.'

'I suspect Doris has changed her mind about your military capabilities,' observed Hilda; 'the engagement that we witnessed at the hospital has convinced us you can be a very daring, almost a fierce soldier.'

'Not more so than any of the others you saw there,' answered Emmeran; 'though I confess to having felt for a short time that fighting fury of which Frank has spoken to me, and which I am very much inclined to think proceeds from mere animal exasperation.'

'Doris,' cried Hilda, 'do you hear his definition of courage?'

'It was not a definition of courage,' rejoined Emmeran, quietly; 'courage supposes a full consciousness of danger with the power of judging how it may best be averted; but this exasperation is a rousing of our worst passions, and is totally reckless of consequences.'

'But,' said Hilda, 'it frequently leads to the performance of daring deeds that make men famous.'

'Or,' said Emmeran, 'or, as the case may be, to dreadful deeds that make them infamous. I

imagine that this sort of exasperation may be felt by murderers; I have even heard that butchers in the act of killing——’

‘Now, Doris,’ cried Hilda, appealingly, ‘is it not dreadful—the manner in which he analyses his own and other people’s feelings! Here have I been for years supposing Frank’s achievements quite heroic,—I had even begun to consider Emmeran himself a sort of second-best hero, and now he explains that both being in a state of animal exasperation were little better than murderers or butchers in the act of killing!’

‘I need not explain,’ said Emmeran, indolently, ‘for I know you understand that I speak of feelings that only lasted for a short time, and which I shall sedulously suppress if ever another occasion offer. You will, of course, despise me thoroughly when I assure you that I prefer the actual pain of my wounds to the recollection of those I inflicted.’

‘No, Emmeran; I do not know any one less to be despised than you are, nor in spite of all you say can I for a moment doubt your eminent personal courage; I have even very little doubt that should any opportunities present themselves you will be quite as subject to these paroxysms of exasperation as Frank.’

‘You may be right,’ he answered, thoughtfully; ‘I cannot answer for myself.’

‘You had better not,’ rejoined Hilda. ‘Suppose, for instance, you had been with Napoleon lately, and heard him give as parole “*Bavière et Bravoure*,” do you think that your enthusiasm would have been less than that of others?—do you doubt that led on by him you would have acted otherwise than at the hospital gate?’

Emmeran did not answer; his eyes followed Doris as she put down her tuning-key and pushed aside her harp, and he waited until she was at some distance from them before he said in a whisper: ‘You ought not to have reminded Doris of the losses of the Austrians at Ratisbon; she has scarcely eaten anything since we got those newspapers from Madame d’Epplen—her face of dismay effectually quelled any enthusiasm I might have felt on the occasion, and there certainly was some truth in what she said about Napoleon personally commanding our troops only to make them bear the brunt of the battle and enable him to save his own army as much as circumstances would permit. No one can admire Napoleon as a general more than I do, Hilda; but as a man my regard and respect for him is much on a par with Doris!’

‘ I suspect her opinion is beginning to influence you on many subjects as well as this one,’ said Hilda.

‘ I should not be ashamed to acknowledge it if it were so,’ he replied ; ‘ but I never was an unreserved admirer of his like my father, Sigmund, and in fact almost all my acquaintances. I still prefer a German to a French general, a German to a French “*parole*,” and might perhaps have heard unmoved Napoleon pronounce the flattering alliteration “*Bavière et Bravoure*.”’

While Emmeran had been speaking his aunt had entered the room ; and Hilda turned from him to meet her and exclaim, ‘ So soon back again ! was Madame d’ Epplen from home ?’

‘ No,—she does not venture out now, as she naturally fears an increase of the unpopularity of all Bavarians when it becomes known that General Wrede and Lefebvre, Duke of Dantzic, are actually on the march here !’

When Doris heard this she came towards her mother, who continued, in answer to a look of eager inquiry, ‘ The peasants are already under arms again, Doris, and have done their utmost to defend the mountain defiles,—when their ammunition was exhausted they precipitated masses of rock and felled trees on the invaders,—but it

was all to no purpose, the armies are advancing and the efforts of the people are in vain.'

'Where is Marshal Chasteler now?' asked Doris quickly.

'Marching from the south, they say; but he will be overpowered by numbers, and is personally in imminent danger, as Napoleon has pronounced him an outlaw, and given orders that he is to be shot if taken prisoner.'

'Oh, mother!' cried Hilda, 'I cannot believe that Napoleon would do anything so unchivalrous towards the actual commander of an enemy's army!'

'You can nevertheless read it,' answered her mother, 'for it is printed in several of the papers that Madame d'Epplen's friends have contrived to send her from Munich. The wording of the death-warrant will please you as little as the act itself, Hilda; it is against "*One* Chasteler,—a so-called general in the Austrian service, who was the cause of the insurrection in Tirol, and has been proved guilty of the murder of numerous French and Bavarians!'"'

Here her mother took a packet of newspapers from her pocket and began to search for those from which she had just quoted, when her eye fell on the following passage, and she could not

resist the temptation to read it aloud with ironical emphasis.

‘The victories of Napoleon the Great are not alone the wonder and pride of this century, but also materially conduce to the happiness and welfare of mankind. From the moment of conquest the vanquished people are under the protection of the Conqueror, the Hero, and the Sage, who seems chosen by Providence to give repose to all nations by conferring on them a higher degree of independence.* The Emperor Napoleon is a father to all, father even to the people with whose army and princes he is at war—his care for the unprotected never ceases.’

‘Hilda, I leave you and Emmeran to read the rest, if you care to hear it, when I inform you that Vienna after a short bombardment has been obliged to capitulate.’

Without taking any notice of the effect her words had produced on her hearers, she continued: ‘Madame d’Eppleñ requested me to keep this information secret, as it might produce unpleasant feelings towards the few Bavarians still resident here, and she seems convinced that a week or two will decide the fate of Tirol, if not of Austria.’

* Verbatim from a newspaper of that period.

A servant opened the door to announce dinner.
No one moved.

Hilda bent down towards Emmeran and whispered, 'Is there any chance of the war ending with the capitulation of Vienna?'

'Not the least,' he answered.

'And you think there may be a battle?'

'More than *one* most probably.'

'And Frank?'

'Frank,' answered Emmeran, 'is by this time with the Archduke Charles — just where he would most desire to be.'

'Oh, Emmeran, I cannot this time rejoice at the success of Napoleon! can you?'

'Perhaps I might if——if Doris did not look so deadly pale and disheartened.'

'Doris's anxiety is on a grand scale,' said Hilda; 'she thinks of French ascendancy and the enslaving of nations—but I,' she added, with difficulty restraining her tears, 'I only think of Frank, and if he be wounded or——or worse——I shall hate Napoleon as long as I live!'

'It is scarcely just—your making him answerable for Frank's safety,' observed Emmeran.

'Yet I do,' she answered; 'for, as you would say yourself, he is the cause, though the remote one, of all that may happen. Would this war

have ever been?—or would there be any war at all if it were not for him?’

Emmeran turned towards her evidently disposed to discuss the subject; but Hilda walked quickly away from him and not in the direction of the dining-room, which that day remained unoccupied.

CHAPTER XI.

CONTAINING MORE FACT THAN FICTION.

IT is not our province to describe the military movements of the Austrians and Tiroleans on one side, and the French and Bavarians on the other, during the ensuing week or ten days. Horrible accounts of the burning and plundering of Schwatz reached Innsbruck, and considerably increased the desire of the burghers there for peace on any terms, so that when the Bavarian General Wrede not long afterwards entered the town, all the bells pealed, a crowd of anxious citizens met and accompanied him through the streets to the suburb called Neustadt, and there listened, with great humility, to his reproaches and threats of punishment in case of future insubordination. At the intercession of the Burghermeister he promised to spare the town, and in reference to Schwatz observed: ‘Other places have been less fortunate than Innsbruck—I wished to save Schwatz also, but a crowd of mad peasants threw themselves into the

houses and had the audacity to fire on my soldiers ; no means could be found to bring these wretches to reason,—and the unfortunate town has in consequence become a heap of ruins ! I know the names of the most guilty here,’ he continued, ‘but His Majesty Max Joseph has desired me to show indulgence whenever it is possible, and I shall do so.’

Here the assembled crowd began to shout, ‘Long live King Max !’ but the General would not listen to them, still less when his own name was shouted, but waving his hand impatiently, and saying such demonstrations could not come from their hearts, he ordered his men to march at once to their camp at Wiltau.

General Deroy was also soon after encamped there, but Lefebvre Duke of Dantzic took possession of the Emperor’s palace, and appeared on the following Sunday with great pomp in the adjoining chapel.

‘Quite a stately personage,’ observed Hilda, whose curiosity had induced her to join the crowd assembled to stare at the French marshal. ‘One would never imagine that this Lefebvre was a miller’s son ! Doris indeed says that military men have a sort of conventional manner, which perhaps may be easily acquired, but, at all events, this

man is not at all what I expected to see. How did you like him, Emmeran, when you were presented?’

‘Oh, very well! he is from Alsasse you know, and speaks German, which is an advantage to him here; but he considers his mission ended, and leaves Innsbruck to-morrow, taking General Wrede and almost all our cavalry with him, so that General Deroy alone remains here with a few thousand men.’

‘And you,’ she asked, ‘you remain with us?’

‘I have been given permission to continue your guest for some time longer.’

‘I am glad to hear that, Emmeran, for you are not fit for active service yet.’

‘We shall see,’ he answered. ‘I don’t at all believe that the peasants will remain quiet when the greater part of our force has been withdrawn; it is absolutely tempting them to rebellion. We cannot obtain certain information, but I am almost sure the ringleaders, Hofer and Speckbacher, are collecting their Landsturm, as they call it, in all directions.’

‘They will not be able to effect much against such a force of regular troops,’ observed Hilda confidently.

‘General Deroy,’ answered Emmeran gravely,

‘is not to retain more than six thousand men, and the peasants can easily muster twenty or thirty thousand, and may be assisted by some of the Austrian troops who have not yet left the country.’

‘But surely, Emmeran, Marshal Lefebvre must know all this as well as you?’

‘Of course he does, but I suspect both he and Wrede have received private orders that cannot be disobeyed; and Deroy must remain here because he is singularly popular—even in Tirol!’

‘I could almost suppose,’ said Hilda, ‘that Madame d’Epplen had also received private orders to leave Innsbruck, for she informed me this morning that she considered the opportunity of returning to Bavaria just now too good to be lost, and asked me to drive with her as far as Hall or Volders.’

‘I rather think,’ interposed Doris, ‘that Madame d’Epplen fears some ill-mounted French officers may take a fancy to her four handsome carriage-horses, and expect to get them for any price they may choose to offer.’

‘Not unlikely,’ said Hilda, ‘just as the Austrians took mine at Ulm you know; but don’t imagine that I blame them,’ she added hastily; ‘such things occur wherever there is war, and if Madame

d'Epplen can save her well-matched grays by flight, she is right to do so. At all events, I have promised to go the first stage with her, as she has offered to let me drive.'

'I hope you won't do any such thing,' cried Doris eagerly.

'Why not, if I refrain from taking the reins in my hands until we are beyond the town?' asked Hilda, laughing; 'and should we afterwards meet any one of higher rank than a peasant, I promise instantly to resign them to the coachman.'

'But how are you to return home?' asked Doris, evidently dissatisfied.

'In the way we generally drive out now,' she answered, 'post horses to the calèche; and for propriety' sake I can take old Janet with me, and have both Martin and Michael on the box in case you and mama will not make the excursion with me.'

'I don't think you can expect or wish my mother to fatigue herself so unnecessarily,' said Doris, 'especially when you remember that you will have no choice of weather, as, if Madame d'Epplen intends to leave Innsbruck now, she will of course take advantage of the escort of the officer who is going to Munich with despatches.'

'Colonel d'Epplen strongly recommended her

to do so in his letter,' answered Hilda, 'but I don't think she likes the delay. With regard to the horses you may be right, as she has not used them for several days; time and weather, however, are of no importance to me, provided I can hold the reins and have a clear road for an hour or two; I want to see if I remember all Frank taught me when we first went to Ulm. Do you remember those drives to Forsteck and Elchingen, Doris?'

'Yes; the Director used invariably to advise me to insure my life and make a will before I went out with you.'

'Would it not be expedient,' asked Emmeran, 'to mention this circumstance to Madame d'Epplen?'

'Quite unnecessary,' said Hilda; 'she is not at all timid, and I am not likely to worry horses that may have to be driven two stages without resting.'

Some days afterwards Madame d'Epplen's carriage and the just then, in consequence of long confinement, very restive gray horses were seen entering the street by Hilda, as she stood on the balcony waiting for them.

'Here they are, dear mother,' she said, stepping into the room; 'won't you look at them? I

never saw better matches—both figure and temperament. Good bye until evening!’

Her mother walked to the window and waved an adieu to Madame d’Epplen.* The young officer, who was the bearer of dispatches, sprang from his carriage and prepared to assist Hilda to mount the box, but with a playful gesture of rejection, and a laughing glance upwards towards her mother and sister, she stepped into the carriage, took a place beside Madame d’Epplen, and demurely drew from her pocket a large fan, the movement causing the exposure of a pair of strong gauntlet gloves that had been concealed beneath, and which immediately protruded from their hiding-place, to the no small amusement of her companions.

A short distance beyond the town Hilda’s wish was gratified, she had ‘the reins in her hand, and a clear road before her;’ the horses were with difficulty restrained to a moderate pace, and they reached the end of the first stage in the most satisfactory manner. Here the escorting officer

* The author feels at liberty to make use of this lady’s name and adventures as she was (what is in Germany called) born a Tautphoeus, and distantly related by marriage to the author. Circumstances soon after made her gray-horses historical, if one may so call the mention of them in most of the histories and memoirs of those times.

required fresh horses; the innkeeper, however, positively asserting that he had none in his stables, the journey was continued in the same manner as before, and for the pleasure of driving Hilda was easily induced to accompany them a few miles further; but the slower pace which consideration for the horses obliged her to adopt, and a somewhat monotonous road through a wood, soon made her begin to think of the return home which would have to be effected with tired post-horses. She resigned the reins to the coachman, and turning towards the carriage bent down and told Madame d'Epplen that she should now take leave and try to reach Innsbruck early that her mother might not be uneasy about her.

While they were still speaking some dark figures began to move about beneath the trees nearest the road, and almost immediately afterwards the officer who was in the calèche that had hitherto followed them, drove up, and turning for a moment to Madame d'Epplen's coachman to desire him to follow, passed on, loudly commanding his postilion to proceed at all hazards.

Hilda looked round and saw a number of armed peasants assembled at the entrance of a rough path leading from the road to the mountains. The calèche before them had suddenly

stopped in consequence of the postilion having refused to urge his horses any longer, and Madame d'Epplen's grays, alarmed either at the loud voices or angry gesticulations of the peasants, and impeded in their progress by the carriage before them, commenced rearing, plunging, and kicking, until the leaders got their legs fairly over the traces, when the continuance of their restive movements was ended by the surrounding peasants catching the reins and forcibly holding their heads steady.

'Do they intend to rob or murder us?' asked Madame d'Epplen, a good deal alarmed.

'I don't know,' answered Hilda, 'but resistance is out of the question. Doris says these peasants are quite unlike Italians or Spaniards—so perhaps—they only——want us——for hostages!' Every trace of colour forsook her face, however, when a desperately bearded peasant held up his hand to assist her descent, and as soon as she was within reach lifted her unceremoniously in his arms to the ground.

Meantime the officer vainly endeavoured to explain the unlawfulness of waylaying harmless travellers, and received for answer that his harmlessness was not quite evident.

'Then keep me prisoner, but let these ladies continue their journey.'

‘We’ll keep you and your despatches, and the ladies into the bargain.’

‘And the horses too,’ added a man who seemed to understand their worth, and had assisted the coachman in putting the harness into order.

‘As to this young lady,’ continued the officer, pointing to Hilda, ‘you had better take care how you treat her,—she intended to return to Innsbruck this evening, and is the wife of an Austrian officer.’

The peasant addressed grinned from ear to ear: ‘I’m no hare of this year,’ he said, ‘and you’ll require long to persuade me that *she’s* the wife of any one yet. Dare say there’s many an Austrian officer who’d have no objection to take her if she hadn’t already set her heart on a Bavarian—yourself perhaps?’

While the carriage was being deprived of its cases, Hilda contrived unobserved to get near the calèche in which she was to have returned home, and called out in English to Doris’s old nurse, who sat in it petrified with horror at the scene before her: ‘Janet, try to get away while they are not minding you, and tell my mother not to be alarmed, as I think if she consult our landlord he may be able to procure an order for our release from one of the peasant commanders. You can easily describe where we have been stopped, and

don't forget to mention the costume of these men, who, I think, are from Vintschgau.'

Some of the peasants naturally enough suspecting treachery when they heard a foreign language, immediately insisted on Hilda's returning to her companions; but she had the satisfaction to perceive that in obedience to the directions given by Janet, the postilion managed soon after to turn the calèche noiselessly on the grass, and then quite unheeded commence his journey homewards.

Before long Hilda and her friends were on their way up the side of the mountain; had it been an excursion planned for amusement she might have enjoyed it exceedingly, for the narrow road was picturesque in the extreme. The openings in the wood discovered wild masses of rock, beyond which at intervals high peaks, still covered with unthawed winter snow, glittered brightly in the afternoon sun. Part of the way had been made by blasting the rocks in the side of the mountain, so that the steep ascent was made evident by a wooded precipice descending to one of those small streams that, as is usual between mountains, was composed of a succession of diminutive waterfalls and pools of clear green water.

After a couple of hours' walking, it occurred to

the peasants that 'the women' might require rest, and it was intimated to them that they were at liberty to choose a place of repose. Hilda, Madame d'Epplen, and her little daughter were soon seated, the servants also at some distance, but the officer preferred striding backwards and forwards as if on guard, casting furious sidelong glances at the more erudite peasants who were endeavouring to decipher his general's despatches, while others, to the scarcely less great annoyance of Madame d'Epplen's maid, had undertaken an inspection of the contents of the various carriage-cases, a proceeding that in a short time gave their resting-place a provokingly ludicrous appearance.

What the peasants expected to find it is hard to say, but it soon became evident that the examination of perfume bottles and pomatum pots was deeply interesting to all, for they crowded around the man who held a dressing-box on his knee, whispering, nodding, nudging each other, and glancing significantly towards Madame d'Epplen and Hilda.

'Have you any money or trinkets in your dressing-box?' asked Hilda.

'No; they can find nothing but combs, brushes, and some new perfumes that I received last week from Lefebvre in Paris.'

That was it. An enlightened Tirolean who was able to read printed French letters, had discovered the name of the then most celebrated perfumer in Paris on so many bottles and boxes, that without further consideration he had come to the conclusion that the well-known and much dreaded name was also that of the possessor of the box, who consequently could be no other than the wife of Lefebvre, Duke of Danzig, or 'The Danziger,' as he was familiarly called by them.*

Madame d'Epplen's explanations were unable to dispel this error; they thought her denying her name under the circumstances so natural, that they only shook their heads incredulously, and tried to calm her anxiety by assurances that they would not lay to her charge the faults of her husband, and that personally she had nothing to fear but imprisonment until she might serve as exchange for some one of equal importance.

'I shall avoid Parisian perfumes and pomatum in future,' she observed, turning to Hilda, 'although I know that a mistake of this kind is not likely ever to occur again. It would be amusing if it were not so provoking, but I can now only hope we have not much further to walk in order to reach our destination for the night.'

* Fact.

‘Dear mama,’ cried little Babette, springing on before them, ‘don’t you like this road? I think it is so pretty! and these good-natured men have gathered me such a lot of flowers.’

But in the end the pretty road appeared long even to Babette, for it was evening before it brought them to the place where they were to pass the night. This was an isolated village situated in a sort of hollow between the summits of one range of mountains and the bases of another. Such places are not uncommon in the valley of the Inn, though few are at such a height as the one that suddenly surprised the wearied pedestrians as they left the deep shade of a pine wood, and saw the setting sun reflected brightly in the round-paned glass of the windows of a church, the large dimensions of which unconsciously led to the supposition that the parish was of considerable extent. Yet the houses in the village itself were few and far apart, and the inn alone conspicuous, very satisfactorily matching the church in size, though only presenting its gable to the road, but this front was furnished with a wide entrance-gate, numerous rows of small windows, and three balconies of different dimensions.

‘Who would have expected to find such a church and house up here!’ exclaimed Madame

d'Epplen. 'Pray, what is the name of this place?' she asked, turning to a man who advanced from the inn to meet them.

'I don't know,' was the answer.

'I mean your village?'

'I don't know,' he repeated.

'My uniform has impaired his memory,' said the officer, who was walking beside her; 'this is the answer we get everywhere since we entered Tirol; and, excepting a few old men and women, we seldom find any one even to ask such useless questions.'

'Perhaps I shall discover a more communicative soul within,' said Madame d'Epplen, walking straight into the house; but, as she was passing the stairs on her way to the kitchen, she and her companions were civilly, but firmly, requested to mount them, then shown into a very large room, and the door closed and locked.

'I really began to forget that I was a prisoner,' said Madame d'Epplen, seating herself on one of the benches, and putting her hat on one of the long deal tables that formed the chief furniture of the room; 'but they need not have locked us up here, for we are not very likely to think of attempting an escape.'

'Why not?' asked the officer, walking from one

window to the other, and examining them carefully. 'I shall certainly try the balcony as soon as it is dark.'

Hilda smiled.

'Have you courage to make the attempt with me?' he asked in a low voice.

'Rather let me inquire if you have bespoken a ladder of ropes and ordered post-horses,' she replied, jestingly; 'the necessary quantity of moonlight is provided, and about midnight we may noiselessly open this casement!'

'You are right,' he said, turning away, 'for if we have moonlight the attempt would be absurd: had it been dark, I could have swung myself down from the balcony, and brought you the ladder that is in the charcoal-shed under the trees.'

'I did not know the plan was so feasible,' said Hilda; 'but is it not more than probable that all these windows will be watched during the night?'

'Undoubtedly; but a peasant-sentinel sits down, smokes his pipe, drinks his wine, and falls asleep!'

'That alters the case,' she said, thoughtfully; 'and short as our imprisonment has been, I can imagine few things more tiresome than a continuance of it. I know that, had I come here volun-

tarily, there is every probability that, after such a long walk, I should have remained sitting quietly in this room for an hour or two very contentedly ; now, I long to step on the balcony or into the corridor, I wish to speak to those children playing on the grass, and I should greatly like to look at the church and visit the churchyard.'

'I should rather visit the kitchen,' said Madame d'Epplen, who had joined them unperceived, 'and try to get something to eat after our long walk. I am afraid they intend to send us to bed supperless.'

Her fears were groundless ; but after a repast of cold mutton, maize-bread, and Tirolean wine, as if they had become suspicious of the intentions of the officer and distrusted his apparent resignation, the peasants removed him to a back room, the small window of which was well-secured with bars of iron, while Madame d'Epplen, her daughter, and Hilda, were conducted to a moderate-sized ordinary bed-room, and merely informed that a fierce watch-dog prowled about the house all night, and they had better remain as quiet as possible.

This injunction was quite unnecessary, for from their windows they saw groups of armed peasants approaching the inn in all directions, as if by appointment, and it soon became evident that

the house was a place of assembly to the neighbourhood.

‘Already more than two hundred,’ said Hilda, as she leaned her forehead against the window and strained her eyes to count the moving figures; ‘I suppose it was on their account we were turned out of the large room opposite; but it will not hold the half of them!’

‘I suppose they will put benches and tables in the lobby,’ observed Madame d’Epplen, ‘and in that case we have not much chance of being able to sleep for hours to come, if at all; for these men will become intoxicated and make a frightful noise, you may depend upon it!’

‘They may make a noise,’ said Hilda; ‘but Doris has assured me they can drink a marvellous quantity of wine without its having any perceptible effect on them.’

‘Well, my dear, I hope your sister may be right; but she seems to me to have rather romantic ideas about Tirol and its inhabitants. The people are handsome, and the dress is picturesque; but I can assure you, that a Tirolean peasant who has had too much wine, and a Bavarian who has drunk too much beer, have a very strong resemblance to each other, and I would rather not see either of them.’

‘There is no danger,’ said Hilda; ‘for it is getting dark, and no one seems to think we require light.’

Yet a sort of light came of itself, for the moon had risen, though not so high as to be visible in places so surrounded by mountains. This moonlight without moon, so peculiar to these regions, gives an indescribably lustreless tone to the landscape, which becomes almost depressingly gloomy if the adjacent mountains happen to be thickly wooded.

Hilda turned from the window and began to make some observations to this effect, but Madame d’Epplen’s thoughts were evidently with the peasants on the lobby outside the door, who were now drinking the health of their Emperor and the Archdukes Carl and John very vociferously.

‘I am sure,’ she said in answer, ‘I wish the moon would shine brightly enough to tempt them to leave the house and finish their revel out of doors.’

At this moment the door was opened, and several men clustered round it, and looked into the room.

‘Do you want anything?’ asked Madame d’Epplen, advancing resolutely.

No one moved or seemed disposed to answer.

‘I hope you will allow me to shut the door again,’ she continued; ‘we are very tired, and greatly in need of rest.’

A man who had jumped on a table behind the others now called out, ‘Don’t mind *her*—it’s the young woman he wants!’

This remark and the laughing applause that followed it were not calculated to reassure Hilda; but, instead of timidly hiding from the numerous pairs of black eyes instantly turned towards her, she came forward, cast a hasty glance at the lock of the door, and then closed it with all her force in the face of the jocular peasants, who were ostentatiously preparing to make way for her.

‘We ought to have done this before,’ she said, shoving the stiff bolt forward.

‘I believe we ought *not* to have done it now,’ replied Madame d’Epplen, drawing back as the men outside began to thump and kick the door while loudly demanding entrance.

The noise brought others to the scene of action, and a tumult ensued which seemed so dangerous to the landlord of the inn that he sent his wife to request the priest to come to his aid, and soon after Hilda and Madame d’Epplen perceived a sudden cessation of hostilities; heavy feet still tramped backwards and forwards, but no one

ouched their door; eager voices talked loudly, and even angrily, but no one demanded entrance, until, after a moment of complete silence, a low knock at the door was followed by the intimation that 'His reverence himself was there, and wished to speak to the ladies.'

'We must admit him,' said Madame d'Epplen, drawing back the bolt; and a moment afterwards a somewhat austere-looking man entered the room, and bowed with all the exaggerated stateliness of manner that had procured him the unbounded respect and admiration of his parishioners. Self-esteem, love of approbation, and firmness were evident in his figure, his walk, and the expression of his features, and though he allowed the peasants to look into the room, he waved them from the immediate vicinity of the door with an air of dignity that would have suited a theatrical representative of royalty.

'I have the honour to address Madame Lefebvre——' he began.

Madame d'Epplen explained, and related what had occurred.

He listened attentively. 'A strange mistake,' he said, 'and one that must be rectified, as we make a great distinction between French and Bavarian.——May I ask if you are a Christian? I mean a Roman Catholic Christian?'

She was fortunately able to give him the most satisfactory assurances on this subject.

‘Excuse my questioning you, but it is well known that many Bavarians are Protestants,—that is, heretics!’

Madame d’Epplen did not think it necessary to mention that Hilda came under this denomination, but allowed him, without even a qualm of conscience, to include her in the blessing which he bestowed on them with solemnly raised arms and eyes that, after a glance upwards, turned impressively towards the peasants in the distance.

‘Mademoiselle, or madame,’ he then said, turning to Hilda, ‘may I beg you to follow me into another room for a few minutes?’

Hilda seemed so very unwilling to comply with this request, that he continued: ‘I have merely some questions to ask you; but they must be answered before witnesses,’ and then added, encouragingly, ‘you have nothing to fear; these questions concern another person.’

Hilda walked to the door, and the peasants outside moved silently backwards to let her and the priest pass them; immediately afterwards, however, following in a dense crowd to the large room at the other side of the lobby.

‘You all,’ said the priest in a loud voice to the assembled peasants,—‘you all heard the young

man's assertions, and his appeal to this young lady to prove the truth of them. You shall now hear her evidence, but even should she prove him to be a spy, you have no right to take the law into your own hands ; the man must be conveyed safely to your commander-in-chief, Andrew Hofer, and that without delay, this night.'

Hilda heard a murmur of consent, and felt a painful consciousness that her words, for some mysterious reason, were likely to be of vital importance.

The priest drew a paper from his pocket, and addressed her, 'Do you know any one — any officer, likely to incur the risk of following you here?'

Hilda thought of Emmeran ;—but remembering that he could scarcely leave Innsbruck just then, she replied, 'No,' with tolerable composure.

'Yet there is a young man now in this house who asserts that he has come here solely on your account. His story is plausible, though somewhat eccentric ; but the suspicion that he is a spy is strong, and you alone can remove it.'

'No one that I know would act as a spy,' said Hilda.

'Then let us suppose he came here on your account : who is he?'

‘I do not know.’

‘Remember,’ said the priest, ‘that in acknowledging him you can remove the distrust of the people here, and relieve the young man in question from a very equivocal position.’

‘Perhaps,’ said Hilda, ‘I may be able to do so when you tell me his name or let me see him.’

‘I cannot do either—as yet,’ answered the priest; ‘we fear that to save an acquaintance and countryman from a disagreeable detention you might join him in trying to persuade us he was the person he calls himself.’

Hilda entered no protest against this accusation.

‘Excuse my speaking so plainly,’ continued the priest; ‘but establishing the identity of this officer, as he calls himself, is of great importance to us, as he is, or pretends to be, the bearer of glorious news;—he tells us that Napoleon has been completely defeated at Aspern, his pontoons carried away by the flooding of the Danube, so that the present position of the French in the island of Lobau is very critical.’

Hilda listened with evident interest, and looked up inquiringly, longing to hear more.

‘This officer coming here in a sort of disguise,’ said the priest, turning as if for corroboration to

the peasants, 'naturally inspires the people with suspicion; they think he might have heard all this in Innsbruck, or that the whole story may be an invention to dispose us favourably towards him. I trust, however, your answers to my questions will be of a nature to confirm all that the young man has said, and that we may rejoice without a doubt to damp our exultation.' Here he walked to the only candle in the room, and, after letting the light fall on the paper in his hand, he looked up, and startled Hilda by the question,—

'Are you married?'

'Yes.'

'How long?'

'Nearly four years.'

'Where, and when did the ceremony take place?'

'In Ulm, in the year 1805.'

'Where is your husband now?'

'Near Vienna; perhaps he was at Aspern. I wish I could hear of him.'

'Is he in the army?'

'Yes; in a hussar regiment.'

'And the name of the Colonel of this regiment?'

Hilda paused, and then, with deepened colour, answered, 'Bereny.'

‘Your husband’s name?’

‘Frank O’More.’

A murmur of satisfaction from the assembled peasants rather bewildered than encouraged Hilda. The priest waved his hand majestically.

‘There is nothing proved as yet,’ he said, solemnly; ‘any acquaintance of the young lady’s might have stated these circumstances, which are probably well known to many people. Is not this the case?’ he added, appealing to Hilda.

‘They are known to my relations and friends,’ she answered.

‘Just so; a brother or cousin, for instance?’

‘I have no brother.’

‘Then let us say, cousin; I think he said he was a cousin too!’

Hilda became uneasy; she feared that Emmerran might actually have had the rashness to attempt her rescue. Such an adventure was unlike an act of his; but what would he not do to spare Doris a moment’s anxiety?

‘Can you describe his appearance?’ asked the priest.

‘How can I, without knowing of whom you are speaking?’ she rejoined quickly.

Folding his arms slowly, and fixing his eyes on her face as if to watch the effect of his words, the

priest at length thought proper to explain: 'This man,' he said, 'has a passport, in which he is named Myer, horse-dealer; and this he says was given him to facilitate his passage through various detachments of the French army. That he is an officer and not a horse-dealer I have myself no doubt; but his coming here instead of going direct with his important intelligence to Andrew Hofer, —resigning to a brother officer who travelled with him the honour of being the first to announce the victory at Aspern, can only be accounted for by your actually being as he asserts—his wife!'

'Do you mean,' cried Hilda, 'that this officer has said he is my husband?'

'Yes,' answered the priest; 'and he imagines he has a right to demand your being set at liberty as well as himself, that you may return together to Innsbruck.'

'Oh, let me go to him!' she cried, endeavouring to pass without further questioning.

'Stay,' he said with unruffled dignity, 'you now know of whom I am speaking, and I therefore expect you to prove the truth of his assertion by giving a description of his person.'

'He is *very* handsome——,' she began hurriedly.

Some youthful laughter became audible in the lobby.

Hilda blushed crimson.

The priest looked in the direction of the door, frowned reprovingly, and then blandly observed, 'There are different kinds of beauty ;—some think emaciated fair-haired men handsome, while others——'

Hilda stopped aghast. Emmeran was fair-haired, and just then remarkably emaciated. Confused, disappointed, and alarmed, she turned away, unwilling to expose her trembling lips and tearful eyes to so many observers ; both, however, had been seen by the priest, and his voice was compassionate when he again spoke.

'I am very sorry,' he said, 'that these precautions are necessary ; but I really must request a description of your husband's person in order to remove the doubts of these people. Is he tall ?'

Hilda remained silent, and continued to look out of the window to which she had retreated, determined at least not to injure Emmeran by her evidence.

'Dark-haired ?' persisted the priest.

No answer.

'Perhaps you will at least describe a wedding-ring that he showed me, and which he said was peculiar enough to identify him ?'

Hilda turned round instantly, and, flushed with

fresh hope, described the ring found in the vault of the Chapel-island.

‘Quite right,’ observed the priest, referring to his paper of notes; ‘and the name engraved inside you can of course also tell us?’

‘It was Waldering of Westenried,’ answered Hilda; ‘the ring had been my father’s, and the name was his.’

‘It would be impossible to doubt any longer,’ said the priest in a loud voice, ‘and I do not hesitate to proclaim my firm belief of all that the Austrian officer has told us. Give him some of the best wine in the house to drink the health of our Emperor and the Archduke Charles, and then let him depart in peace with his wife whenever he pleases.’

These words were followed by a tumultuous rush of peasants down the stairs. The priest stood for a moment, expecting perhaps some deferential movement on the part of Hilda; but on perceiving that she sat down, and leaning her elbows on the nearest table covered her face with her hands, he strode haughtily out of the room and turned the key in the lock, perhaps to remind her that she was a prisoner until he chose to permit her release.

CHAPTER XII.

A WHIM.

THE room was not improved in appearance since Hilda had first seen it some hours previously. Disorderly rows of half-emptied wine-bottles and glasses stood on the long deal tables, broken crusts of bread were strewn around,—wooden benches upset, and a strong odour of bad tobacco contaminated the atmosphere: was it the latter which caused the feeling of suffocation that made her open a window and gasp for breath? she tried to think so, but was unfortunately given time to ventilate the room and convince herself of the contrary. There was much shouting, and probably drinking below stairs,—perhaps Frank could not get away from the people there? Still it was very possible that he was less anxious for a meeting than she was. ‘Should she let him perceive this? Certainly not. She would remember her promise to Doris never again to repulse him; but after all that had occurred he could not expect

any actual demonstration of rejoicing on her part.' And Hilda drew up her slight figure to its most dignified height, and began deliberately to harden her heart.

This dilatoriness on the part of Frank was most injudicious—it gave Hilda time to remember that they had parted in anger, that he had braved her displeasure by going to Meran with Madame de Bereny, had in fact given her so much cause to be offended that she imagined she had a right to expect some show of penitence on his part before she could forgive without reserve. A quick step on the stairs brought her cogitations to an abrupt conclusion, and made her heart beat so violently that it was absolutely a relief when she became aware its direction was towards Madame d'Epplen's room. But the delay was short,—after a few returning steps across the lobby, the key turned in the lock, the door of her room opened, and she started up to place herself rigidly in forced composure beside a chair, the back of which she grasped to keep her tottering figure steady.

And all this trepidation had been endured, and this great effort to conceal her heart-sinking made for—a chambermaid, who entered unceremoniously, bringing her the shawl and hat she had left in Madame d'Epplen's room.'

‘ You’re to put these things on, and be ready when he calls you,’ said the girl, throwing them on the table beside Hilda; ‘ I heard him say he had no time to lose, for he wants to be with Andrew Hofer on Mount Isel early in the morning.’

A sudden revulsion of feeling made Hilda disposed to rebel. ‘ No, she would *not* put them on—she would not aid and abet in his joining Andrew Hofer. His sending such a message, or any message, was unpardonable!’

The chambermaid collected a number of bottles and glasses on a tray, and while carefully carrying the clattering brittle ware out of the room, omitted to lock or even firmly close the door; and Hilda paused for a moment to consider should she return to Madame d’Epplen or control her temper and await Frank’s coming? It is strange that it never occurred to her that he too might dread as much as wish for a meeting; and when the silence in the room permitted her to become aware that some one was passing the balcony with lingering uncertain steps she never thought of him, but stood deeply musing in the room until she heard her name pronounced in a very low voice, and on looking up saw him standing at one of the windows that opened into the balcony.

Hilda sprang forward in an irrepressible movement of joy, and found the window at which he stood fortified as it were with a nearly impervious row of those prickly cactus that so very frequently decorate such windows until the weather permit their removal to the balcony itself.

It is possible, however, that just then neither she nor Frank had any objections to the interposition of these plants; he peered through and over them without embarrassment, and Hilda's hand braved the danger of thorns in a hurried endeavour to find an opening through which it could meet his. The hand of course received a very satisfactory portion of kisses before it was withdrawn—and so the dreaded meeting was over.

‘You will return with me to Innsbruck, Hilda?’

‘Ye—es, if you wish it, though I have some qualms of conscience at deserting Madame d’Epplen.’

‘You need have none; I have explained who she is, and a few days hence you will see her again safe under Hofer’s protection.’

‘That is—a prisoner?’ said Hilda.

‘Well, I suppose so. Chances of war, you know. I may be the same to-night if you do not assist me to pass the Bavarian pickets.’

‘But I hope, Frank, you have not put yourself into real danger on my account; for, after all, I do not think these peasants intended us any harm.’

‘I am sure they didn’t,’ he answered; ‘but I could not endure the idea of your being a prisoner, and forced to wander about on the mountains against your will.’

‘It was very kind of you,’ said Hilda.

Frank laughed.

‘I heard you sacrificed the pleasure of being the bearer of good news,’ she continued.

‘Not exactly, Hilda, for I had always intended my comrade Stainer to be spokesman on this occasion, as he is a Tirolean and ran the risk from the purest patriotic motives; * while I, after having ascertained that there was no chance of further military movements for some weeks proposed accompanying him in order to——return to Innsbruck. We were furnished with passports giving us the professions in which we thought we could best pass muster; Stainer chose to be supposed a landscape painter, and I——’

‘The priest told me that you represented a horse-dealer,’ said Hilda.

* Fact.

‘I do so still,’ he answered; ‘have you any objection to walk down to the valley with such an ill-dressed fellow?’

‘None whatever—by moonlight,’ said Hilda gaily; ‘only let me first take leave of Madame d’Epplen, and tell her she need be under no further apprehensions either about me or herself.’

A short time afterwards they descended the stairs together and left the inn amidst the respectful greetings of a dense crowd of peasants.

When out of sight and walking down the narrow road at a rapid pace, Frank told Hilda that he had met Janet on her way home in a great state of anxiety, had sent a message to his aunt by her, and then struck off at once into the mountains. ‘I had no difficulty in finding you,’ he added, ‘for an innkeeper who knew Stainer told me there was to be a meeting of riflemen in this direction to-night, and the party who took Madame d’Epplen prisoner were on their way here.’

‘I wonder what they have done with her horses,’ said Hilda.

‘They are to be sent to Hofer* as soon as affairs have taken a decided turn.’

* They were used on state occasions by Andrew Hofer, during the imprisonment of Madame d’Epplen; but he returned them to her in good condition at a later period.

‘And when will that be?’

‘To-morrow or the day after, I hope.’

‘You don’t mean to say, Frank, that you expect the peasants to gain any advantage over General Deroy?’

‘I mean that the general has not been left half enough troops to enable him to maintain his position, and that even his eminent military talent will scarcely save him from the fate of Bisson!’

‘I won’t—I can’t believe that,’ cried Hilda vehemently.

‘Well, I daresay I am mistaken,’ said Frank good-humouredly; ‘perhaps we shall be defeated, and I may be a prisoner of Deroy’s, an inmate of the hospital, or a corpse for the churchyard about this time to-morrow!’

‘Frank, if I had known this, I would not have left the inn,’ she cried, stopping suddenly; ‘but I can go back again, for you told me you could not well pass the Bavarian pickets without my assistance—and I won’t assist you to peril your life unnecessarily!’

While saying the last words she turned back and began a resolute reascent of the mountain. Frank followed reluctantly, in ill-concealed wrath, and with lips firmly pressed together. Hilda did not like this constrained silence, and when she

spoke again there was even more deprecation in her voice than words.

‘You can easily imagine, Frank, how much I must wish to return to Innsbruck and my mother——believe me nothing but anxiety for your safety would induce me to put myself again in the power of these peasants.’

‘Do not expect me to feel or feign any gratitude for this proof of regard,’ he answered, ‘or suppose me more in your power than I actually am. With such a passport as mine and these clothes I could easily satisfy the scruples of the officer on picket at the bridge; and I need scarcely tell you that there is nothing to prevent me from taking the same way to Andrew Hofer as the peasants to whom you are returning.’

Hilda stood still and the light of the moon, now high above the mountains, fell full on her agitated face as she exclaimed bitterly: ‘Oh, how could I be such a fool as to suppose that I had any influence! I see it all now——you have made a slight deviation from your way to take me with you, but that is all! I shall go back to Madame d’Epplen, and will not embarrass you with my presence when passing the officer on picket, or make any useless attempts to prevent you from crossing the mountains should you prefer that mode of joining your friends.’

‘Hilda,’ said Frank earnestly, ‘let me assure you that I have taken this opportunity of returning to Tirol solely for the purpose of seeing you again. We have been very foolish, and given people an opportunity of talking of faults on both sides, incompatibility of temper, and so forth; but as I believe in the main you rather like me, and as I have discovered, during our last separation, how very much I like you, I have fully determined to avoid disputes of any kind in future. Now, it is evident, that for this purpose one of us must yield, and, as you will *not*, I have resolved to do so completely and without reserve. Half measures are, however, my aversion, and, therefore, with the exception of military matters and my duty as a soldier, I put myself completely under your command, and promise the obedience of a serf and the humility of a slave. Are you satisfied?’

Satisfied? she was delighted—exultant! but with all her love of power Frank’s manly unreserved confession of affection remained uppermost in her mind; and when, blushing deeply, she placed her hand on his arm, and with a very bright smile assured him he would not find her so tyrannical as he supposed, she would have greatly liked to seal the proposed compact with an unreserved embrace.

That Frank himself felt strongly tempted to do so is more than probable,—at least there is no other way of accounting for the sudden flush that passed across his face, and the out-stretched arm that for a moment seemed inclined to place itself in the proper position for a waltz round the small moon-lit space before them; but he refrained, and with an affectation of modest reserve, though with eyes betraying more mirth than he perhaps intended, he drew back, saying, ‘I beg your pardon, Hilda, I had almost forgotten that I am under restraint and dare not offer a caress, though I may hope to receive one occasionally when I deserve it.’

Frank was a good actor, and his words and manner instantly explained his intention to force her to make advances, which he could receive in whatever manner he pleased; she concealed her annoyance, however, even while giving it vent by instantly putting his patience and obedience to the test.

‘I shall now return to Madame d’Epplen,’ she said, ‘but must forbid your leaving the village to-night with the peasants who are about to join Hofer.’

Frank gravely bowed acquiescence.

‘Or,’ she continued, with some hesitation, ‘I believe I should prefer your taking me back to my mother—and then remaining with us.’

‘Impossible, Hilda. If I reach Innsbruck to-night, I must join my comrades on Mount Isel to-morrow. All the officers now with Hofer are volunteers, and even my slight military knowledge may be useful, as I happen to be acquainted with the ground about the town.’

‘Oh, very well,’ she said, walking on, ‘If you think your absence more satisfactorily accounted for by being on the top of this mountain I have nothing more to say.’

‘Not so,’ he answered quickly; ‘it is that I consider myself obliged to remain with you when you are the prisoner of these peasants, no matter how well intentioned they may be; but you are a soldier’s daughter and a soldier’s wife, Hilda, and ought to understand the dilemma in which you are placing me!’

She did understand it perfectly, and fearing to exasperate him by an abuse of the power given her, turned round instantly; ‘I will not take upon myself the responsibility of leading you into danger,’ she said slowly, ‘and therefore prefer giving you leave to do as you please in this instance.’

‘Thank you,’ said Frank eagerly; ‘let us get on to Innsbruck as fast as we can; I daresay the little vehicle I bespoke is waiting for us already at the inn in the valley.’

‘Were you so quite sure that I would return with you?’ she asked with some pique, accepting, however, his offered arm with a very good grace.

‘Well, yes; I thought giving you full power would have a good effect, and I was not mistaken. You would not like people to say that I had shirked an engagement when it came in my way, would you?’

‘No one would dare to say that of you,’ she cried indignantly.

Frank laughed, as if his apprehensions on that score were not very great, and Hilda clasped her hands over his arm while she continued: ‘But really, Frank, your fearlessness is now so well known that you can afford to be more prudent, and you must promise to be so for my sake.’

‘I begin to think that I bear a charmed life,’ he answered gravely, ‘for if ever wounds or early death were to be my portion, I ran my greatest risk lately at Aspern. Not an officer of my regiment escaped, so that when the last engagement ended I was in full command of the few men who could be mustered.’

‘Was Colonel Bereny also wounded?’ she asked.

‘Dangerously, Hilda, and so hideously disfigured

and crippled that death would be a release to him.'

Hilda shuddered, and was scarcely conscious of the thought that prompted her next questions.

'Did you write to his wife? has she gone to him?'

'No. Vienna is still occupied by the enemy, and he knows too well the dangers and privations to which she would be subjected to allow her to join him. Men cannot have—cannot even wish to have—their wives with them under such circumstances.'

'I should certainly go to you, Frank, if I heard you were wounded—no danger or privation should prevent me.'

'And yet, Hilda, seeing you beside my bed in the ward of a military hospital would cause me more pain than pleasure.'

'Indeed?'

'I should feel like poor Bereny, unwilling to let my wife run the risk of catching the fever always so prevalent in such places; I should dread your seeing the horrible wounds—but talking of wounds reminds me of Emmeran, how is he? What a lucky fellow to escape the hospital and have you and Doris to take care of him!'

‘Doris did take great care of him,’ said Hilda ;
‘but you have no idea how gallantly he behaved
in that unexpected insurrection.’

‘Oh yes, I know all about it, for my aunt
wrote a full account of everything that occurred
to Pallersberg. Sigmund’s death surprised us, of
course ; but we felt no regret, rather the contrary
I am afraid, as neither of us had reason to like
him, and there is no doubt that Emmeran will
be a more worthy chief for the family of
Waldering.’

‘I think he will,’ said Hilda.

‘My aunt flatters herself also,’ continued
Frank, ‘that his political opinions are gradually
changing—his admiration of Napoleon quite on
the wane.’

‘Doris’s influence is great,’ said Hilda in a low
voice.

‘Of course it is,’ he answered, thoughtfully ;
‘but less in politics than you suppose. Emmeran
is one of those who have been made adherents of
the French by circumstances, national feelings,
and personal connexions ; but he will see through
the designs of Napoleon as clearly as any of us
when the war is at an end.’

‘With all my heart I wish it were at an end !’
murmured Hilda fervently.

‘It is greatly to be desired,’ answered Frank, ‘even by those who most long for advancement, and can only obtain it sword in hand! Such, you know, is my case; but, after the frightful loss of life I have so lately witnessed, I can sincerely join in your wish. Perhaps peace in the world would promote the same in our family, or at least put an end to the political disputes which have for some years helped to disunite us! A family more at odds than we have been in this respect it would be hard to find!’

‘Very true,’ said Hilda; ‘but one cannot help having political opinions, and it is hard not to express them when not only witnessing but actually suffering from the events taking place.’

‘I acknowledge,’ said Frank, ‘that it is sometimes very hard to be silent: I felt it so when last in Innsbruck and unable to give you warning of the coming revolt of Tirol; I feel it now, while exulting in a victory I scarcely dare to mention lest a quarrel might be the consequence.’

‘Tell me all about your victory, Frank; I should like to hear it.’

He shook his head and remained silent.

‘I should indeed,’ she continued, ‘and don’t at all mind hearing that the French have been defeated. I only care for Bavarians now——you

surely don't require me to forget that I am Bavarian as well as English, Frank ?'

No, he did not require anything so unreasonable, and the result was most satisfactory. The rest of the way down the mountain was beguiled by an animated account of the battle of Aspern, followed by a recital of Frank's subsequent adventures during his journey to Tirol with Captain Stainer as joint bearer of important intelligence that might have long been withheld from the public by a dilatory, timid, or ill-disposed post.

Frank had purposely made a deviation from the narrow road, and by taking advantage of a steep footpath not only shortened the way but managed to emerge from the wood at a small inn situated in the valley where he had ordered a peasant's market-cart and horse to be in readiness for him.

'I cannot propose your resting here, Hilda,' he said, advancing to the closed door of the house, and knocking loudly, 'for we have no time to lose; but I must ask you to wait a few minutes while I metamorphose myself into a farm-servant, as in that capacity I shall have to drive you into Innsbruck.'

The door was opened, and a sleepy hostler made his appearance; on recognising Frank, however, he turned towards the stable, and

brought out a horse ready harnessed, Hilda meantime sitting on a bench before the door, feeling strangely confused and happy. She scarcely observed a man who afterwards ran out of the house and spoke to the hostler, until she saw him take some dust from the road and deliberately throw it over his hair, then dip his hands in the spring and rub them with some clay, during the latter operation taking care to give his nails a sufficient quantity of mud ; but when the same man walked towards her with the bent knees and slouching gait of a mountaineer, she could scarcely believe it was Frank, so perfect was his personification of a peasant, so complete the change in his appearance that had been effected in the space of a few minutes.

‘ I should have looked better if I had borrowed a Sunday suit,’ he said, smiling at her astonishment ; ‘ but it would not have answered my purpose so well. I am afraid you think me very ugly and rather dirty in this guise ? ’

‘ Clay is clean dirt, Frank, and will, I hope, enable you to pass the Bavarian pickets without question. Won’t you sit beside me in the cart ? there is room enough on the seat for us both.’

‘ You forget that I am Franz the hostler’s son,’ he answered, laughing ; ‘ and I must sit on this

plank at your feet and allow my legs to dangle in closest proximity to my horse's tail.'

'An awkward place, Frank, if he were disposed to kick; and he has no blinkers, nor in fact almost any harness!'

'He wants nothing but traces to take us to Innsbruck,' was Frank's reply, as he placed himself on what might be supposed the footboard of the seat. 'You shall see how we drive in this part of the world,' he added; and seizing the reins he flapped them up and down two or three times, while he muttered a few guttural words of encouragement, and the horse immediately started off at a good hard trot.

Strange to say the road appeared shorter to Hilda in that jolting vehicle by moonlight than when seated on the box of Madame d'Epplen's well-built carriage in the morning, and she could hardly believe they were approaching the much dreaded picket when Frank exclaimed, 'Now, Hilda, here we are; tell the truth with reserve, and avoid delay as much as possible; you must take my purse and passport, however, for both would be encumbrances to the stupid lout I intend to represent for the next quarter of an hour;' and while speaking he rounded his shoulders, bent still more forward his head, and

gave to his handsome features an expression of supremely dull indifference. When ordered to halt he did so slowly, contriving to pass the officer some yards, and then employed himself disentangling the lash of his whip while receiving the merited reprimand for his dilatory obedience.

Hilda fortunately happened to know the officer on picket, and told him of Madame d'Epplen and her own capture by the peasants, adding that she owed her release to the circumstance of her being the wife of an Austrian officer, and that she was now on her way home.

'And the name of the village where Madame d'Epplen is now detained?' asked the officer.

'We could not find it out,' she answered, 'for not one of the people there would tell us.'

'Of course not. But,' he added, pointing to Frank, 'this smart coachman of yours may know it. I say, my lad, can you tell me where this lady came from?'

"Innsbruck," answered Frank, biting industriously at a knot in the lash of his whip.

'I mean where she came from to-night.'

Frank named the inn where they had procured the market-cart; and the officer would have been satisfied if some one had not explained that the

place named was in the valley and close to the river Inn.

‘I am afraid you will find him very stupid,’ said Hilda.

‘A Tirolean is more frequently cunning than stupid,’ replied the officer, ‘and his answers make me suspect he knows more than he chooses to tell. If it were not for the fear of inconveniencing you, I should like extremely to retain him until we find out Madame d’Epplen’s place of imprisonment.’

‘Oh, pray let him take me into Innsbruck!’ said Hilda; ‘my mother and sister must be in a great state of anxiety about me, and you can obtain the information you require from any good map. The village, I think, lies higher than what is called the Middle Mountains; but before any one can be sent Madame d’Epplen will have left it, for they told her she must get up at daybreak, and it will soon be that now!’

‘Very true,’ said the officer, looking eastwards; ‘and I have no one to send in pursuit, nor would it be of any use, for the peasants are assembling in thousands, and can do what they please just at present. Good night, or good morning, madame; I hope you may reach home without further impediment.’

Not long afterwards they were rattling over the pavement of Innsbruck; and, turning into the street that ended their journey, Frank's eyes glanced along the fronts of the houses, and he exclaimed, 'Just as I expected—neither my aunt nor Doris have gone to bed; their windows are open, and they are looking out for us. I hope some one will come to hold the horse, so that I may go up stairs for a few minutes.'

The entrance-gate was wide open, and the whole family assembled to meet them. Frank's dress when he unconsciously assumed his own manner caused a good deal of mirth, in which he joined, even while declaring that he had not time to amuse himself. He had left a uniform in Innsbruck, and now required it for immediate use.

'There are other clothes of yours here——' suggested Hilda.

'I must don the uniform nevertheless,' he answered, laughing; 'without it the peasants won't obey commands, and I may have to make myself useful on Mount Isel a few hours hence.'

'Hilda will give it you,' said his aunt.

And Hilda turned reluctantly enough towards her room, followed by Frank, who lost no time in packing the uniform and whatever else he re-

quired into a portmanteau which he sent down stairs, and then said cheerfully, 'Farewell, Hilda, for a day or two,—or more, as the case may be; our next meeting depends so completely on the success of a cause to which you are ill-disposed, that I scarcely know whether or not you wish to see me again?'

'Oh, Frank, how can you talk so?'

'Is it not true?' he asked; 'will seeing me console you for the defeat of the Bavarians now in and about Innsbruck?'

Hilda struggled hard for composure. 'If it were a French general or a French army——' she began.

'I perceive I shall only be half welcome,' he said, good-humouredly; 'nevertheless, I hope to see you before long again. And now, dear Hilda, we must take leave, or rather you must take leave of me; for you understood, of course, that when I promised obedience and humility, all demonstrations of regard must henceforward proceed from you!'

'Nonsense, Frank.'

'I am serious, Hilda; you have openly scorned me before all the world here, and I now, as a sort of compensation, expect you to make love to me with equal ostentation.'

‘I am sure you expect nothing’ of the kind, Frank; you know, as well as I do, that it would be very un—un—maidenly!’

Frank’s colour mounted to his temples: ‘Perhaps, then, Hilda,’ he said, hesitatingly, ‘we had better make some arrangement for occasions like the present; for instance—I have, you know, promised to obey you implicitly, and if you order me to kiss you, or anything of that kind, I’ll do it!’

‘I am afraid you must wait a long time for any such order from me, Frank,’ she replied, secretly enjoying his embarrassment, and with difficulty restraining a laugh.

‘Oh, as long as you please!’ he retorted, with some pique; ‘I renew my promise of obedience to any extent, and only wish we had more time to expend on this sort of foolery. Remember, the next proposal must come from you; meantime, adieu!’

Hilda followed him to the door, and watched with some chagrin his unreserved leave-taking of her mother and sister; the moment, however, that he turned to the stairs, she ran back into her room, and threw one of the windows wide open, just in time to see him spring into the market-

cart, and then, looking up towards her, flourish his hat in the air.

‘He is not offended, after all,’ she murmured, with great satisfaction; ‘and when he comes back he will perhaps have forgotten this tiresome whim!’

CHAPTER XIII.

A VOW.

HILDA was still in her mother's room talking over the events of the last four-and-twenty hours when Emmeran returned from a mountain in the neighbourhood, where, as a person well acquainted with the country, he had accompanied General Deroz when reconnoitring in that direction. As Emmeran's absence had prevented him from hearing of Hilda's imprisonment, he listened with equal surprise and interest to all she had to relate, seemed to consider Frank's arrival and the account of the battle of Aspern very important intelligence, and said that, though much fatigued, he would return to head-quarters and report the information he had obtained.

‘Stay!’ cried Hilda; ‘you must first give me the assurance that no pursuit of Frank will be attempted.’

‘Do not be uneasy,’ he answered, smiling; ‘you have not told me what direction he has taken, and

I do not want to know it. Frank's words admit of no doubt;—Napoleon has lost a battle, and to us the certainty that we can entertain no hopes of reinforcements from Lefebvre may be of great consequence.'

'Then,' said Hilda, 'Frank was right after all when he said a capitulation was inevitable; he spoke of General Bisson, who was nearly in the same position, you know, last April——'

'Deroy is not Bisson,' said Emmeran, confidently; 'though Lefebvre has certainly put his military talents to a hard proof by leaving him such an insufficient force to keep possession of a country like Tirol. This second insurrection has been kept nearly as secret as the first, and we find it utterly impossible to procure any sort of information concerning the movements of the peasants. I therefore felt no sort of uneasiness about you——but then I never dreamed of your going beyond our outposts with Madame d'Epplen!'

'I ought not to have done so,' said Hilda, 'as it has turned out; however, it is of no importance. A night's rest lost, that's all.'

'Take a day's rest instead,' suggested Emmeran, preparing to leave the room; 'I shall do so too—if I can.'

Hilda thought the advice good, and slept until disturbed by the report of cannon in the direction of Mount Isel. The continuation of such sounds soon roused her completely; and on going to her mother's room, she found her and Doris in the state of restless anxiety that she remembered they had all felt so frequently at Ulm. The recollection, too, of what they had witnessed from their windows during the former insurrection recurred vividly to their minds, and materially aided their fantasy in bringing before them the scenes being enacted beyond the town; so that, unable to cheer each other, they spent the greater part of the day in wandering despondingly from room to room, making futile attempts to employ at least their hands when the combat seemed to flag, and listening at intervals to the marvellous and improbable accounts of victory reported by their landlord and the Austrian servants in the house, which were immediately and stoutly contradicted by Hilda's Bavarian domestics, whose information, however, was chiefly obtained from soldiers in the act of carrying their wounded comrades to the hospital.

It was undeniable that General Deroz was in a critical position, for, in addition to the whole country being in insurrection, and volunteers

daily increasing the numbers of his opponents, his hopes of receiving supplies of ammunition were extinguished, in consequence of all communication with Bavaria having been cut off. These facts being well known to the Tiroleans and the Austrian officers commanding on Mount Isel, they towards evening proposed a capitulation on the same terms that had been accepted by the French two months previously.

But General Deroy was neither intimidated by his difficulties, nor urged to yield by his officers, as his predecessor had been: he refused to capitulate, and would only agree to a four-and-twenty hours' truce; which, however, was declined. The day had drawn to a close during the negotiations, and by mutual consent hostilities ceased on both sides with the waning light; the Tiroleans and Austrians trusting that the next day would bring them complete victory.

It was on the evening of that day that Emmerran noiselessly entered the drawing-room in his aunt's apartments, and walked straight to the sofa on which Doris was sitting.

'We heard you were safe,' she said, looking up with a smile; 'but how fatigued you must be! And they tell us nothing is decided, and that the combat will begin again to-morrow. We must

not, therefore, think of asking you any questions, for you ought to go to bed and sleep as long as you can.'

'I believe you are right,' he answered; 'and you would, at all events, feel little interest in hearing of our various attacks and repulses on Mount Isel. At present we have neither lost nor won, and may think ourselves well off if matters remain so.'

'You are talking enigmas,' said Hilda, coming towards him; 'what do you mean?'

'I mean that we are in as perplexing a position as can well be imagined, and that we have a great deal to do and very little time to do it in,' he answered, drawing out his watch; 'so that I can scarcely allow myself two hours' rest, and should then like you to give me some supper before I leave you again.'

'Only two hours' rest for an invalid such as you are!' exclaimed Hilda.

'I wish it were twelve instead of two,' he answered; 'but I have no time to play invalid now, and must be at head-quarters before midnight.'

'In that case,' said Doris, placing her watch on the table before her, 'we must order you to bed at once; and I will promise to waken you when it is time to get up.'

‘Thank you,’ said Emmeran, cheerfully; ‘with you on guard I have no doubt I shall be fast asleep in five minutes.’

Hilda followed him out of the room.

‘Emmeran,’ she said earnestly, ‘may I ask why you must leave us again at midnight?’

He whispered the three words, ‘We must retreat;’ then placed his finger on his lips, and closed the door of his room.

And Hilda returned to her sister, and watched her pale, anxious face, without venturing unpermitted to repeat the words that had tranquilized and pained herself in nearly equal proportions.

Emmeran was wakened, supped in haste, received with evident satisfaction a parcel from Hilda, out of which the neck of a field flask protruded, and took leave.

‘Doris,’ he said, lingering beside her for a moment, ‘my usual soldier luck attends me this time also——Frank will in the course of the coming day appear as conquering hero, while I——’

‘Dear Emmeran,’ she interposed, eagerly, ‘there are cases where a capitulation is both honourable and humane. Why not save life where the sacrifice of it is useless?’

‘That is what we intend to do,’ he said, bitterly.

‘Let us rejoice it is to be so,’ she continued; ‘and that we may not expect another day of strife and bloodshed.’

‘You may rather expect a day of triumph,’ said Emmeran; ‘and if, during the course of it, you bestow a thought on me, it is all I can reasonably hope.’

‘Will you not return to us?’ she asked, looking towards Hilda, and evidently surprised at her silence.

Emmeran shook his head.

‘I thought,’ she continued, ‘you would perhaps remain here, as hitherto, an invalid prisoner on parole?’

‘I am, in fact, no longer an invalid, Doris; and General Deroy did me the honour to say he required my services.’

‘That alters the case,’ she said, extending her hand.

‘You’ll think of me sometimes, Doris?’

‘Very often, most probably.’

‘And regret my absence?’

‘Undoubtedly.’

‘And wish for my return?’

‘Most assuredly.’

‘I suppose I must be satisfied,’ he said, turning away.

‘I think you ought,’ said Hilda, ‘for I do not know any one of whom she will so often think, or so much wish to see again, excepting perhaps—Frank!’

He had slowly progressed towards the door while she was speaking, stood outside until she ceased, and then closed it without attempting an answer.

The knowledge which Emmeran had acquired of the country about Innsbruck during his three years’ residence there proved of eminent service during the arrangements made for the retreat that had become absolutely necessary, and which General Deroy judiciously undertook during the darkness of night. Favoured by the noise of the rushing waters of the flooded river and the blasts of a strong wind, the movements of the troops were unobserved, and at daybreak the Tiroleans perceived with amazement that excepting the pickets who had shared their wine very freely with them during the night not a Bavarian soldier was to be seen!’

Some faint attempts at pursuit were made, some skirmishing attempted at the places which they passed ; but the order of the retreating force

was so complete that little loss and no delay was caused; and as the Tiroleans, like the French Vendéans, and the Scotch Highlanders in 1745, invariably supposed the contest ended when the invaders were chased from or voluntarily evacuated the country, they soon desisted, satisfied that Tirol was again Austrian and Franz their Emperor!

The importance and advantages of the insurrection in Tirol for Austria now began to be felt and understood, and addresses from the Emperor and his brothers to the people were in the form of letters published in the Innsbruck papers. For this second emancipation of the country, as well as for the victory of Aspern, which soon became publicly known, a solemn *Te Deum* was celebrated in the Franciscan church, at which the civil governor Baron Hormayer, the officers who had fought on Mount Isel, Hofer, Speckbacher, and the martial monk Haspinger, were present,—also Doris and Hilda, and the latter made no attempt to conceal the curiosity and interest with which the peasant leaders inspired her. She had listened with eager attention to Frank's praises of Speckbacher's natural military genius, to his description of Pater Haspinger ever to be seen where the contest was raging, his massive crucifix serving at one mo-

ment to console the dying, the next either as weapon or as *bâton* to lead the riflemen to a charge. For Hofer Frank felt a sort of personal regard, which Hilda began unconsciously to share, when chance, or perhaps some innocent man-œuvring on the part of her relations, had brought her frequently into contact with him. His picturesque appearance undoubtedly had its weight with her as well as others, and she soon discovered that one of his greatest charms was his being such a perfect representative of a Tirolean peasant.

Andrew Hofer's immense popularity among his countrymen was partly owing to his retaining his peasant habits and manners even after he had been invested with the highest authority by his Emperor; the Tiroleans were jealous and watchful in this particular,—preferred seeing him on foot, though he was a good rider and looked well on horseback, and would have been much offended had he made any change in his dress. There is also no doubt that his being as uninstructed, simple-minded, and superstitiously religious as themselves, rather increased than lessened the respect shown him; he was one of themselves—their representative—the reflection of his glory fell full on them,—and though there were few of the other and more talented leaders who were not

conscious that they could take his place, not one of them ever succeeded in being even supposed his rival. Fortunate for Tirol that it was so, for never had insurrectionists a more humane leader,—fortunate also for the invading armies that could feel certain the prisoners and wounded left in the country would be treated with consideration and kindness.

Meantime Frank had not forgotten his whim, as Hilda expected,—on the contrary, the continuation of it seemed to have become a trial of power on his part, and his aunt having resolved never again to interfere, he was allowed to decline ‘keeping up appearances’ without the slightest opposition. He came to them regularly every morning as visitor, but only accompanied them in their walks or drives when especially invited by Hilda. A stranger might have supposed him a timid lover waiting anxiously for encouragement, that was ever given with provoking reserve; but Hilda interpreted otherwise his proud humility and ostentatious obedience,—she detected many a glance of mirthful saucy triumph that was wholly unobserved by others, and which tempted her to punish him more frequently than was perhaps quite judicious considering the short time they were to be together.

Frank had not the least idea that the course he was pursuing would prove less irritating to Hilda than to himself; and, had he not been her husband, the case might have been different; but, feeling certain of his affection, and unable to find the slightest cause for jealousy, she was perfectly satisfied, and amused herself by tempting him to forget his resolution whenever an opportunity offered.

‘I have received a letter from Pallersberg,’ he said one morning soon after he had taken his accustomed place beside her.

She looked up anxiously. ‘I hope you will not have to leave us sooner than you expected, Frank?’

‘I believe I must,—there is nothing more to be done here,—the French have had only too much time to recover their losses and receive reinforcements, and the Archduke thinks the sooner we are able to give them battle again the better.’

‘And is there no chance of peace?’ she asked despondingly.

‘That,’ he replied, ‘is a question which Napoleon alone can answer. At present war is the order of the day, and I must join my regiment. Pallersberg tells me that poor Bereny has just died of his wounds, and there is a letter enclosed

which I must either forward or deliver to Madame de Bereny in Meran.'

'Forward it, Frank,' said Hilda, with heightened colour; 'no one can expect you to undertake the part of a near relation on such an occasion!'

'But her near relations are all in Hungary,' he said, pleadingly, 'and most of his also, and with those in Vienna no communication is now possible. It is very hard for a woman in her state of health to receive such intelligence unprepared.'

'Very hard,' said Hilda; 'but I do not see why you should be the person chosen to inform, or rather to console her.'

'Probably,' suggested Frank, 'because I am an intimate friend, and just now very near Meran.'

'I think,' she rejoined, 'it would be quite sufficient even for an intimate friend in your place to write a few lines of condolence. Most communications of this kind are by letter.'

'I will not quarrel with you again, Hilda, even for Madame de Bereny,' said Frank, seating himself at her writing-table; 'but when I see Pallersberg I shall not forget to tell him that should I lose my life in the next engagement a short communication by letter addressed to you will be all that is necessary, even should he or any other

friend be within a day's journey of your place of residence.'

He opened the paper-book while speaking, and saw the facsimile of his own last letter to Pallersberg on the blotting-paper before him.

'It is fortunate that you have preserved this memento of treachery,' he said, turning towards her.

'Why so?' she asked quickly.

'Because I might have forgotten these words, which I can now make intelligible in a satisfactory manner. I had been requested while here to ascertain if the country were really so devoted to Austria as we had been led to suppose, and desired to give the information in the usual manner, that is to write of Tirol and the Emperor Franz as of lovers separated by force or adverse circumstances.* Tirol was the 'lost one,' that is the lost country, 'as passionately attached as ever.'

'Can it indeed be so?' cried Hilda, coming towards him and fixing her eyes on the writing, though she knew every word of it well by heart.

'Does it require further explanation?' he asked, pointing to the words, 'the separation

* In this manner much useful information was communicated at that time.

forgiven.' 'You know the Tiroleans thought the Emperor ought never to have consented to that part of the treaty of Presburg.'

'True, most true,' said Hilda, confused.

'And,' continued Frank, 'the intense desire of Tirol for reunion with Austria was in fact beyond my most sanguine expectations.'

'I see,—I understand it all now; but at least, Frank, you must allow that these words were quite as applicable just then to me, or——or——to that Madame de Bereny!'

'I don't know any such thing, Hilda,' he replied, 'for I certainly had had no reason to flatter myself that there was anything like an intense desire for reunion on your part,—rather very decidedly the contrary.'

'Well, Frank, I should think you could hardly have expected it to be otherwise, all things considered?'

'I have no clear recollection what I expected until my aunt sent for me,' he answered; 'but I remember perfectly my deep mortification at a reception for which I was so unprepared, and the vow with which I consoled myself when standing afterwards at that window.'

'A vow?' repeated Hilda.

'A vow,' he continued, 'that the next proposal

of union should come from you. I asked Doris to try and induce you to make a concession, but she declined further interference. I was, however, myself tolerably explicit after bringing you back to Innsbruck lately; but now you know without reserve the conditions on which we can live together and cease to be at odds.'

'I thought this was a whim,' said Hilda, in a low, constrained voice, 'and am sorry to find you have been tempted by a very pardonable demonstration of womanly pride on my part to make a vow that places such an insuperable barrier between us! We must resign ourselves to live apart, Frank; but——can we not cease to be "at odds," as you call it?'

'We can try,' he said, starting up from the table, and beginning to walk up and down the room with long strides, while she reseated herself, and bent over her work in real or affected diligence.

'I suppose,' she said, after a pause, and without looking up, 'I suppose you will now consider yourself at liberty to go to Meran?'

'By no means,' he answered, stopping before her; 'I must keep my promise as well as my vow, and you have only given me permission to write to Madame de Bereny.'

‘Go to her if you prefer it, Frank,’ said Hilda, with forced composure; ‘I release you from your promise, and require henceforward no more deference from you than is due to me as your cousin.’

‘Why, Hilda, we shall then be more at odds than ever!’

‘No,’ she answered; ‘for I am as fully resolved as you can be not again to quarrel.’

‘We have but a short time to put our good resolutions into practice,’ he said, forcing a smile; ‘for you know that a few days hence I must leave Innsbruck!’

‘But we can meet again in Meran, Frank.’

‘I don’t know whether or not it will be possible.’

‘You cannot perhaps ask for leave of absence?’

‘That depends upon circumstances over which I have no control.’

‘But you *will* return to us as soon as possible?’

‘I daresay I shall be fool enough to do so should an opportunity offer,’ was his somewhat irritated reply.

And Hilda, concealing her displeasure, observed blandly, ‘You will, Frank, for——Madame de Bereny will be in Meran!’

His eyes flashed, but he turned to the writing-table, saying, 'Thank you for reminding me; I had altogether forgotten her existence.'

'Now, how can I believe that?' thought Hilda, after watching him for some time seated at the table, his head resting on his clasped hands, and his quick breathing and flushed face betraying great internal emotion. 'He feels his guilt and finds it hard to write words of consolation to a woman who'——

Frank just then sat upright, drew a sheet of paper towards him, took up a pen, and began to write with a facility that might have overcome her jealous suspicions had they not instantly turned into a new channel. 'That was certainly not the first letter he had written to Madame de Bereny! He was probably writing on other subjects—perhaps regretting that his jealous wife would not allow him to condole in person?—perhaps even urging her to return to her relations, among whom he would soon have an opportunity of seeing her?'——

And still Frank wrote—wrote—wrote—and took another and another sheet of paper until Hilda's resentment turned into passionate anger, which was, however, not in the least perceptible, as she laid down her work, rose deliberately, and

walked with dignified composure towards the door.

‘Hilda,’ he said, snatching her hand as she passed him, ‘yield this time, and command me ever after.’

‘No, Frank; you cannot expect me to forget my sex, and ought to know that it is your part to propose, and mine to accept, or you may command—I believe you have a right to do so—and I must of course obey.’

‘I cannot propose, and will not command,’ said Frank, letting her hand fall and taking up his pen again.

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‘Did you not invite Frank to come here this evening, Hilda?’ asked her mother some hours later.

‘No, mama, I never thought of it—I left him writing a long letter to Madame de Bereny.’

‘Which, I suppose, he expects you to send to the post,’ said her mother, pointing to the large sealed packet, lying on the writing-table.

‘I don’t—know,’—answered Hilda, taking it up reluctantly, but a moment afterwards starting and

becoming very pale when she perceived that it was addressed to herself.

She turned from her mother and sister when she broke the seal, but had scarcely read more than a few lines before she exclaimed in a voice of anguish, 'He is gone! gone without taking leave of us, and we may never see him again!'

'You must have offended him deeply,' said her mother reproachfully; 'nothing else would have induced him to leave us in this manner.'

Hilda walked quickly out of the room without attempting an answer.

Her mother turned to Doris. 'What do you say now?' she asked; 'is this also a mere lovers' quarrel?'

'We must hope so,' answered Doris, 'though it is certainly a very ill-timed one.'

'Ill-timed, indeed,' repeated her mother; 'for, as Hilda herself says, we may never see him again; he has left us to join an army on the eve of battle, and who can tell what may be the result of the next engagement for him?'

'That thought may induce her to answer his letter in a conciliatory manner,' suggested Doris, with tears in her eyes; 'and, should he be spared to us—a few months' correspondence will be a good preparation for their next meeting.'

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

‘THIS state of suspense is dreadful,’ cried Hilda, a few weeks later, as she walked up and down the room holding a torn and soiled newspaper in her hand; I believe—that is, I—I fear the French have gained a victory.’

‘Of that, unfortunately, there can be no doubt,’ said her mother; ‘for without good information that salvo of artillery would not have been fired from the fortress of Kuffstein; but I cannot yet believe in the truce, of which people are talking so much.’

‘Why not?’ asked Hilda; ‘here you can read it printed in the supplement to the Munich newspaper.’

‘We know it is printed,’ said Doris; ‘but the manner in which the half-dozen copies of that supplement have reached Innsbruck is not calculated to make us suppose it official.’

‘Now, my dear Doris,’ interposed Hilda, ‘we

know from experience that if an officer with a trumpeter had been sent among your patriots, they would either have made him a target for their rifles, or, at best, taken him prisoner; you cannot deny their want of chivalry on such occasions!’

‘I do not deny their ignorance of military etiquette, Hilda; but you cannot expect me or my patriots to give much credence to information brought to us by a man in his shirt-sleeves, mounted on an old white horse, flourishing above his head a few copies of a newspaper, and shouting, “A truce, a truce—don’t fire at me—I’m only the baker from Kochel!”’*

‘Well, I believe in this truce,’ said Hilda; ‘and I hope it will soon be succeeded by a peace. What would I not give for a few lines from Frank to assure me of his safety!’

‘As he has promised to write to you,’ said Doris, ‘you may depend upon it he will do so as soon as he can.’

She was right. The next day Hilda held a letter from Frank in her hand—a few, a very few, hurried lines, merely intended, as he said, to let

* In this very undignified manner—perhaps for the reasons previously mentioned—the intelligence of the truce of Znaim was first conveyed to the Tiroleans.

her know that he was alive! Pallersberg had promised to write more at length, and he also would do so as soon as possible.

Pallersberg's letter contained a concise account of the battle of Wagram, ending with the words, 'We lost no cannon, and the enemy took no prisoners, so that but for the retrograde movement of our troops it would have been impossible to have decided which had gained the advantage. It is said that Napoleon is much chagrined at the indecisive result, and the death of some of his best officers. Our losses are great. The Archduke Charles and almost all our generals are wounded, and some of my best friends are at this moment under the hands of the surgeons.'

'He does not say a word about Frank,' cried Hilda impatiently.

'Why should he, when Frank himself has written?' asked her mother.

'But what a letter!' rejoined Hilda. 'He generally writes so well, and this is scarcely legible! I never received such an unsatisfactory letter in all my life!'

'I think it very satisfactory to hear that he is alive and well,' said her mother; 'and I do not know what you could expect or desire more under the present circumstances.'

‘Just such a letter as you have received from Major Pallersberg,’ answered Hilda, ‘with perhaps the addition of some words about the truce and some wishes for a peace!’

‘I doubt his having heard anything about a truce when that was written,’ observed her mother.

‘And I,’ said Doris, ‘am quite sure that Frank could not have written otherwise than hastily, and perhaps illegibly, if his best friends were under the hands of surgeons.’

‘You may be right, Doris,’ said Hilda; ‘for he spoke very feelingly of those he lost at Aspern, and, as my mother says, I ought to be satisfied that he is alive and well.’

For several days there was much uncertainty concerning the truce, but at length General Buol, who commanded the Austrian troops in Tirol, having received despatches from the Archduke John, issued a proclamation announcing the conclusion of an armistice at Znaim, one of the stipulations of which was an immediate evacuation of Tirol on the part of the Austrian troops. He recommended the people to lay down their arms and submit to what was inevitable with patience, resignation, and fortitude: finding them, however, determined not to follow his advice and pertina-

ciously incredulous respecting the truce, he retired from Innsbruck with the troops and cannon under his command, and, taking the route over the Brenner, with great reluctance left Tirol to its fate. A large army under Lefebvre soon after entered the country. Innsbruck, destitute of defenders, was compelled to submit; and, when upwards of 26,000 men marched into the town, the peacefully-disposed citizens began to hope that the war in Tirol was terminated.

‘It is very provoking,’ observed Hilda, ‘that Madame d’Epplen, though restored to liberty, cannot leave Innsbruck; the state of the country is such that any attempt of the kind would probably end in another compulsory mountain excursion, so she has at last resigned herself to remain here and return to her old lodging, where she now intends patiently to await the arrival of her husband.’

‘She may have to wait long,’ said Doris.

‘Not, if the present truce lead to a peace,’ observed Hilda; ‘for, notwithstanding all the reports in circulation of the proceedings of the peasants and their wild mode of warfare in the defiles of the mountains, she cannot believe that they have any chance against Lefebvre and an army such as he has now under his command.’

‘And what is your opinion?’ asked Doris, with some hesitation.

‘I feel myself growing superstitious,’ answered Hilda, gravely, ‘and begin to believe in the prophecy that the Tiroleans are always to be successful on Mount Isel. If Lefebvre were a Bavarian I should send to warn him; but as I hear he was, or rather pretended to be, surprised that General Deroz could not subdue the country with an army of six thousand men, I should have no very great objection to his finding out that *he* could not do so with one of six-and-twenty thousand.’

‘I believe he is beginning to have some fears on that subject himself,’ said Doris; ‘at least he was by all accounts signally defeated yesterday.’

‘Where? when?’ cried Hilda, eagerly; ‘but perhaps you have only had your information from our rebel landlord, Mr. Hartmann?’

‘Not the less true on that account,’ answered Doris; ‘and as to your Duke of Danzig——’

‘He is Napoleon’s duke, and not mine,’ interposed Hilda, in playful deprecation; ‘and I only feared a little—just a very little exaggeration on the part of our furiously patriotic landlord: he looked intolerably triumphant when speaking to you just now in the corridor, and that was the

reason I did not stop to hear what he was relating to you and mama.'

'There is no exaggeration necessary on this occasion,' said Doris, with heightened colour; 'Marshal Lefebvre, who left Innsbruck with the intention of forcing his way over the Brenner into Southern Tirol, has not only been altogether unsuccessful, but has returned to Innsbruck in as disastrous a manner as can well be imagined. His column, while winding in straggling files on the mountain road, was attacked in all directions by the armed peasantry, and, after an obstinate conflict, the whole army, twenty thousand strong, were routed and driven back with immense loss. The disorder was so great that the Marshal himself escaped in the disguise of a common trooper.'

'This is intelligence indeed,' said Hilda; 'and what may we expect now?'

'Another battle on Mount Isel,' answered Doris, 'where the peasantry are already in great force, with all their best leaders.'

Her words were prophetic, for the Tiroleans, animated by their success, no longer stood on the defensive, but, flocking from all quarters to the standard of Hofer, assembled in multitudes on Mount Isel, the scene of their former triumphs,

and destined to be immortalized by a still more extraordinary victory. Lefebvre had collected his whole force, with thirty pieces of cannon, on the small plain which lies between Innsbruck and the foot of the mountains on the southern side of the river Inn. The Tirolean army consisted of about 18,000 men, and some Austrian soldiers who had remained in the country to share the fate of the inhabitants. Speckbacher commanded the right wing, the Capuchin monk Haspinger the left, and Hofer the centre. At four o'clock in the morning the energetic monk roused Hofer, and, having first united with him in fervent prayer, hurried out to communicate his orders to the outposts. The battle commenced soon afterwards, and continued without intermission until late in the evening, the troops under Lefebvre's command constantly endeavouring to drive the Tiroleans from their position on Mount Isel, and they in their turn to force the enemy back into the town. For a long time the contest was undecided, the superior discipline and admirable artillery of the enemy prevailing over the impetuous but disorderly assaults of the mountaineers; but towards nightfall, the bridge of the Sill was carried after a dreadful struggle; the enemy gave way on all

sides, and were compelled to retreat into the town with great loss.

This victory was immediately followed by the liberation of the whole Tirol. Lefebvre fell back across the Inn on the day after the battle, and, evacuating Innsbruck, retreated rapidly to Salzburg. Of this event he wrote to Napoleon that it was :

‘Non une defaite, mais un mouvement retrograde. Oui, Sire, c’est une de ces retraites dont l’histoire parle tant, que vient de faire votre armée!’

While Lefebvre was making this retrograde movement, which even the officers under his command scarcely hesitated to call a flight, Hofer triumphantly entered Innsbruck. He sat with Haspinger in an open carriage, drawn by Madame d’Epplen’s well-known greys, and was surrounded and followed by an immense crowd of peasants, whose shouts were accompanied by the incessant pealing of the adjacent church bells. His presence in the town had become necessary in order to check the disorders consequent on the irruption of so large a body of tumultuous victorious peasants into a town containing numerous rich citizens, whose patriotism was considered more than doubtful. He dined at the house of a friend,

and while at table received a deputation from the town requesting protection of person and property. The streets had become filled with the peasant influence; an endless procession, preceded by a man carrying a large crucifix, forced its way forward, and with the feeling of importance and freedom from the thralldom of law, civil or military, came the resolution to seize and appropriate whatever they required. It was known that the arms which had been taken from the different parishes by Lefebvre had been stored in the Imperial palace, and to this arsenal the crowd at once turned. The Castellan would not deliver up what had been intrusted to his care, and sent immediately to Hofer, who, at last out of all patience, started up, rushed to a window, and, throwing it wide open, shouted to the crowd below:

‘What are you here for? To rob and plague people? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Why don’t you go after the enemy? They are not too far off! Go after them to the Lowlands——go, I say, for I won’t have you here! And if you don’t do as I bid you——I won’t be your leader any longer!’

This speech, to the surprise of many anxious hearers, gave great satisfaction; and the threat

at the end produced instant obedience. The crowd dispersed: some, as he had ordered, went in pursuit of Lefebvre; others returned to their homes. The commencement of this speech was prompted by the impulse of the moment; the last words proved how perfectly he understood that his power depended altogether on the free will of his countrymen, and that by not arrogating more than they chose to give him, and making a favour of being their leader, he could prevent the outbreak of those scenes of riotous anarchy that usually accompany insurrections; and, in fact, he managed by these means to give to the revolt of his countrymen that stamp of heroism which has made it one of the most interesting episodes of modern history. The entire command of the country was now assumed by Hofer; proclamations were issued and coins struck in his name as Commander-in-Chief of the Tirol; and the whole civil and military power was placed in his hands.

‘Well, Doris,’ said Hilda, ‘you were very much shocked at Lefebvre’s taking old Count Sarutheim and the Baroness Sternbach with him as hostages,—what do you say to Hofer detaining Madame d’Epplen and Baron Voelderndorf as reprisal?’

‘I heard,’ answered Doris, ‘that it was a party of peasants who took them prisoners on the Volders-road, and Hofer could not well refuse to detain them when they were brought to him. I am sure he treats them as well as possible, and I dare say will allow us to visit them if we ask his permission ; shall we try ?’

‘By all means,’ said Hilda ; ‘but before we go into the streets we must cut off or otherwise dispose of our hair, for a proclamation of his this morning has forbidden the women here to wear curls, low dresses, or short sleeves !’

‘Well,’ said Doris, ‘can we not make plats of our curls, and hide them under our hats ?’

‘But is it not absurd his issuing sumptuary laws ?’ asked Hilda.

‘I don’t know that,’ answered Doris ; ‘for the new French fashions are enough to provoke any one in authority to forbid them.’

‘I confess,’ said Hilda, ‘that I like everything that is fashionable, and should persist in wearing my curls and short sleeves and low dresses whenever and wherever I pleased, if it were not for the warning at the end of the proclamation.’

‘What warning ?’

‘That the offending curls may with impunity be

cut off by any peasant who chooses to prove his patriotism at my expense !’

‘I wonder who put this into Hofer’s head,’ said Doris.

‘I can quite imagine the idea original,’ observed Hilda, laughing ; ‘for besides the real cares and labours of elevated situation, he contrives to give himself incessant occupation by attempting to arrange private quarrels of all kinds, but especially those between husbands and wives.’*

‘Then let us go to him directly,’ said Doris, smiling archly. ‘Who knows but he may be of use to us in more ways than one ?’

‘I have no intention of making him umpire between me and Frank, if that be what you mean,’ said Hilda, rising ; ‘my reverence for Hofer has not reached that height yet ; but I should like to obtain permission to see Madame d’Epplen, and find out if we can be of any use to her.’

They continued so eagerly occupied in discussing these subjects, that until their progress in the streets was actually impeded they scarcely perceived them to be unusually crowded ; but a sudden rush of passengers at length induced them to send their servant to inquire the meaning of a

* This remark has been made by every historian of those times.

noisy procession that began to issue from a neighbouring street.

‘Some prisoners, ma’am; taken, they say, by Speckbacher at Unken.’

‘How can we best avoid the crowd?’ asked Doris, looking round.

‘By going on to the palace as fast as we can,’ answered Hilda, hurrying forward.

At the entrance to the building two stalwart men from Hofer’s own valley were posted; the noise in the street seemed to have in some degree attracted their attention, for, though they still continued to lean indolently on their rifles, their eyes were fixed keenly on the moving multitude in the distance.

Doris and Hilda entered, mounted the broad staircase, and wandered about for some time, the servant knocking at, and trying to open, the doors of the state apartments, which, however, were all locked, and apparently uninhabited.

‘You had better,’ said Hilda, ‘go down stairs again and make inquiries; or, if possible, find some one who will take us to Andrew Hofer.’

The servant left them; and when she and Doris prolonged their walk into an adjacent corridor, they saw at the end of it a couple of men, in size and costume precisely resembling the sentinels at

the palace gate. These, however, were seated on wooden benches, had small pipes in their mouths, and beside them stood a little girl, who, in a clear, expressive voice was reading a legend of some saint, to which they were listening with profound attention: this child was Babette d'Epplen,* who, on hearing the footsteps of Doris and Hilda, looked up, and with an exclamation of delight sprang towards them.

Admittance to Madame d'Epplen was demanded, but of course refused, and then little Babette, standing on tiptoe and putting her mouth to the keyhole of the door, called out—‘Mama, Doris and Hilda are here and want to see you, and Leppel says he dare not let any one into your room without an order, because you are a prisoner; and I want you to allow me to go away from the corridor that I may show them Andrew Hofer’s room. They think he will tell Leppel and Peter to open your door whenever they come here!’

‘You may go,’ said her mother, ‘but don’t forget to tell Katty.’

Katty, the person who attended the prisoner’s rooms, was in a not very distant room, the door of which was ajar, and she now looked out and

* Fact.

nodded her head to signify that she required no further explanation; whereupon Babette jumped and danced along before them, showing herself already perfectly acquainted with every turning in the palace, until a couple of sitting sentinels again indicated the door of an apartment containing inmates of more importance than the others.

Fortunately at this moment a man came towards them carrying a tray on which were dishes of steaming pork and saur-kraut, and he immediately undertook to announce them, though he explained that the 'commander-in-chief' did not at all like being disturbed at dinner time.

'Then say nothing about us at present,' suggested Doris; 'we can wait without inconvenience.'

The man entered the room, but before he had time to close the door she saw Hofer and his friends seated at table with their coats off. The apartment was of the simplest description, very plainly furnished, and a strong odour of bad tobacco was wafted into the passage, already redolent of saur-kraut. Doris turned away her head in a manner that made Hilda laugh and whisper, 'You must not object to a little patriotic perfume, Doris, or I shall begin to think that Andrew Hofer would suit me for a hero better than you.'

I like him for not requiring finer tobacco or ordering a better dinner than he could have at home, and he certainly looked as picturesque as jovial just now with that tumbler of wine in his hand !’

Before Doris could answer, a number of peasants turned into the corridor, trampling along it in their clouted shoes and talking loudly and eagerly. They advanced to the door of Hofer’s room and attempted to force an entrance, but the sentinels opposed their passage, pushing them back with very little ceremony while informing them that the commander-in-chief was at dinner.

‘We want to see Andrew Hofer,’ cried one.

‘We must see Andrew Hofer,’ shouted another.

‘We have a right to see Andrew Hofer,’ vociferated several at once, and almost at the same moment the door opened and Hofer stood before them.

He was still without his coat, but his red waistcoat and broad leather girdle, ornamented with the embroidered initials of his name, made the incompleteness of his dress scarcely perceptible, the more so as, according to his custom, he had placed his broad-brimmed black-plumed hat on his head.

‘Father,’ cried one of the peasants, well know-

ing it was the manner in which he best liked to be addressed—‘Father, the prisoners taken by Speckbacher at Unken are in the court; what are we to do with them?’

‘Treat them humanely,’ he answered, ‘and in a Christianlike manner, but don’t let them make their escape.’

‘Some officers are among them,’ continued the man.

‘So much the better,’ he answered; ‘perhaps we can exchange them for Count Sarntheim and the Baroness Sternbach.’

‘But, Father, one of these officers was at Schwaz and helped to burn and plunder the town; we expect you to make an example of him and order him to be shot without delay.’

The whole expression of Hofer’s countenance changed in a moment—it was as sombre as it had previously been cheerful—and he strode forward towards the staircase without speaking.

The peasants followed, loudly reiterating their accusations against the unfortunate prisoner until they were out of sight and hearing.

‘Let us go home,’ said Hilda, answering her sister’s look of dismay with a shudder; ‘Heaven knows what we may see or hear if we remain longer in this place!’

‘Don’t you think we ought to take Babette back to her mother?’ suggested Doris, turning to the child, who had no sooner heard of prisoners in the court than she had vaulted on one of the corridor window frames, leaving her thin legs and small feet dangling downwards, while she pressed her face against a pane of glass and gazed eagerly into the space beneath. ‘Come, Babette — come——’

‘Oh, Doris!’ she answered without moving from her place of observation, ‘there’s Count Emmeran among the prisoners, and the peasants are dragging him forward, and have torn all his uniform!’

In a moment Doris and Hilda were beside her, but only for a moment; the next they were rushing down the stairs and into the court, where, forcing their way through the crowd, they reached Hofer’s side just as Emmeran, with wonderful self-possession, was giving the assurance that he had never commanded or aided in any act of incendiarism, and had not been in Schwaz at the time of the conflagration.

‘He was in Innsbruck, and with us,’ cried Doris vehemently, ‘in our house, wounded, and unable to leave his bed. Numbers of people can bear witness for him!’

‘Who?’ asked Hofer, looking round—‘who said they saw him in Schwaz?’

‘I saw him!’

‘And I!’

‘And I!’ cried some men who had been rather ostentatiously loading their rifles, as if to encourage Hofer’s wavering severity; ‘I remarked his light hair and gaunt figure well, and resolved to have my revenge when I met him at Unken; and I would have had it after it was all up with his regiment, if he had not sprung into the river and been taken prisoner by our captain himself!’

‘Is this true?’ asked Hofer, turning to Emmeran.

‘Yes,’ he answered; ‘I was overpowered and taken prisoner when swimming in the Saalach, but these men mistake me for some one else, for I was here in Innsbruck when they supposed they saw me in Schwaz.’

‘This is true—quite true,’ cried Doris, pushing aside the men who were holding him. ‘Surely,’ she added, appealing to Hofer, ‘surely you will not allow him to lose his life for the fault of another person? Oh, for Heaven’s sake, take him out of the hands of these vindictive men!’

‘If,’ said Hofer, looking round appealingly, ‘if it can be proved that this officer was not at

Schwaz, he has a right to be treated as humanely as the other prisoners. You say,' he added, turning to Doris and Hilda, 'you say he was at that time in your house?'

'Yes,' cried Doris eagerly; 'at that time, and long after. He was wounded at the hospital gate in April, and our landlord and many others can prove that he was unable to leave his room for several weeks afterwards.'

'Is he your brother?' asked Hofer.

'N—o.

'Or your cousin?'

'Not—exactly,' answered Doris, embarrassed.

'That's the truth, at all events!' cried a man forcing his way through the crowd. 'The brother or cousin was shot in April, and lies buried in our churchyard! This is quite another sort of relationship. The man's her sweetheart, and she wants to save his life by palming him off on us as the other one!'

After this explanation the peasants again closed round Emmeran with threatening gestures, while Hilda and Doris vainly endeavoured to make them understand that one brother was killed and the other wounded. Hofer pushed aside the men who had placed themselves before him, and coming close to Doris, as she stood pale with terror and

unconsciously grasping Emmeran's arm, he asked with unmistakeable sympathy, 'Is he indeed your sweetheart?'

'Yes—oh, yes!' she answered, scarcely conscious of the meaning of her words until she felt her hand strongly clasped in Emmeran's.

'Betrothed with your mother's consent?' continued Hofer, with increasing interest.

'Yes—yes—betrothed—anything—if you will only save him from these men!'

'Stand back!' cried Hofer authoritatively. 'There may be some mistake here, and I won't have any one shot without better proof of his guilt. Stand back, I say, and be satisfied that one of the darkest cellars in the palace will be his prison until we know all about him and his doings.'

Then, without waiting for a demonstration of approval or the contrary, he gave the necessary directions to his aide-de-camp, and turned to the other prisoners. Emmeran was conducted [and followed out of the court by several angry-looking but quite as many good-humoured peasants, the latter rather loudly whispering that they liked a wedding better than a funeral, and wished that Hofer would send for Peter Haspinger and let the marriage come off at once.

Still accompanied by Doris and Hilda, Emmeran descended to the vaults beneath the palace, silent until the castellan, who officiated as jailor, stopped before the oaken door of one of them. Then Emmeran bent down and whispered, 'Doris, dearest, what am I to say when questioned by Hofer concerning our betrothal?'

'Whatever you please,' she answered, blushing deeply; 'I cannot contradict you, for I was so terrified that I scarcely remember what I said.'

'May *I* remember?' asked Emmeran.

At that moment the door grated on its hinges and discovered a long, damp, and perfectly dark cellar.

The faces of the angry peasants assumed an expression of satisfaction at the dreary prospect; the others as evidently exhibited their disappointment at finding the vault filled with lumber instead of the choice wine they fully expected to find there.

As the castellan politely made way for Emmeran to enter, the latter once more turned to Doris and whispered eagerly, 'Give me the assurance that we are indeed betrothed, and I shall feel happier in this gloomy cellar than I have ever felt in all my life!'

Doris unhesitatingly placed her hand in his, but

turned away her head, fearing the numerous witnesses might discover that more was meant than simple leave-taking.

A moment afterwards the door of the vault was closed and doubly locked upon Emmeran, and the peasants began to ascend the stone staircase with the castellan.

‘Let us follow them,’ said Hilda, touching her arm, ‘or we may chance to be imprisoned in these cold passages. Adieu, Emmeran!’ she added, in a louder tone; ‘we are going back to Hofer, and hope to procure you at least a pleasanter prison.’

‘Thank you,’ he answered cheerfully; ‘but you need not be uneasy about me, for I am perfectly comfortable — or, rather, supremely happy just now!’

Hofer was not in his room, but some friends of his who were there informed Doris and Hilda that he had gone to Madame d’Epplen’s about an exchange of prisoners. They followed him, and had no longer any difficulty in obtaining permission to enter when it was understood they wanted to speak to him on important business.

Hofer was standing in the middle of the room, with his thumbs stuck into his braces, and as perfectly at his ease as could well be imagined. Madame d’Epplen and Baron Voelderndorf, who

were opposite him, were less so; for Hofer had just consented to allow the latter to go to Munich in order to effect the exchange of Madame d'Epplen and himself for the Baroness Sternbach and Count Sarntheim,* and they were thanking him for an act of courtesy and generous confidence of which they had scarcely expected to find him capable.

There is no better test of character than sudden elevation to power, and few have borne it better than Andrew Hofer. Some months previously Hilda had rather condescendingly declared her intention of making, during the autumn, an excursion from Meran to his valley—she had even proposed spending a night at his inn on the Sands, though she had heard it was but an insignificant place—and now, the life of one of her nearest relations had but half an hour previously depended on a glance or word from him, and she at that moment stood anxiously awaiting his leisure and hoping to find him favourably disposed, when she should request the removal of Emmeran to a more eligible prison.

Hofer, however, was quite unchanged by his unlimited power and great popularity; with the

* Fact.

same good-humoured smile and unceremonious manner that he would have received her at the door of his inn, he nodded his head, and said jocosely, 'I suppose you want a better lodging for your sister's sweetheart? Now, here's Baron Voelderndorf going to leave Innsbruck just in time to make room for him, and I know he will be as safe in one of these rooms as in a cellar, and far more snug!'

'But you,' said Doris, 'you, I hope, believe that he was not at Schwaz?'

'Yes; Madame d'Epplen has told me all about him; but I can't consent to his leaving the cellar until night-fall—so don't ask it. Keeping him out of sight is keeping him out of danger, you know, and therefore he must promise not to look out of the window for two days at least! And you,' he continued, turning to Baron Voelderndorf, 'you pledge your word of honour to return here if you are not exchanged for Count Sarntheim?'

'I do.'

'Well, then,' said Hofer, 'you shall have a passport, and may leave Innsbruck as soon as you please. I wish you all good evening,' he added, stretching his hand towards his hat, which, in deference to Madame d'Epplen, he had placed on the table; and as he left the room they saw that

he made a sign to the sentinels to remain seated, then placed his hand on little Babette's head, and stooped down to look into the book out of which she was reading the conclusion of the legend that had been interrupted by Doris and Hilda a couple of hours previously.

CHAPTER XV.

HEART AND HEAD NO LONGER AT VARIANCE.

EMMERAN'S detention in the palace made Doris and Hilda unwilling to leave Innsbruck, and induced them to defer their journey to Meran from day to day and week to week. In the mean time Baron Voelderndorf, unable to effect the proposed exchange, returned to his prison,* and not only confirmed the intelligence of the truce of Znaim, but informed Hofer that peace would certainly be concluded in the course of a few weeks, and that there was no chance whatever that Napoleon would allow Austria to retain Tirol.

'It's not true—I won't believe it!' had been Hofer's irritated answer, but the impression made was deep, and he was on the point of recalling his commanders from their posts and dismissing the peasants to their homes, when, unfortunately, all his plans were changed by the arrival of three

* Fact; some years later he wrote an account of the war in Tirol.

leaders of the insurrection, who some time previously had abandoned his cause as hopeless and left Tirol with the Austrian troops. These men had returned to Innsbruck by a very circuitous route, in order to avoid the French army; they had been long on the way, would not believe in a peace disadvantageous to Tirol, and were the bearers of three thousand ducats and a gold chain and medal sent by the Emperor Franz to Hofer, who thus at once, finding all that he had done legalized, and all that he might do authorized, no longer hesitated to continue the defence of the country.

With this chain and medal, Hofer was formally invested by the abbot of Wiltau in the Franciscan church. High mass was celebrated, a *Te Deum* sung, and then in the presence of an immense crowd, scarcely able to restrain their tearful enthusiasm and joyful acclamations, the prelate having blessed the chain, which was brought to him on a silver salver, Hofer advanced and received, kneeling, this much-prized token of his Emperor's favour. It was Tirol's last festival for many a day, and the climax of Hofer's glory!

The short speech which he made at the banquet that succeeded the church ceremonies has

been considered sufficiently characteristic to become historical.

‘Gentlemen,’ he said, ‘I thank you for having by your presence increased the honour done me. News I have none, though I have three couriers on the road—Johnny Watcher, Joey Sixten, and Franzl Memmel—they might have been here long ago—but I expect the vagabonds every minute!’

About the time that Hofer so spoke Hilda sat in Madame d’Epplen’s room, and had just concluded an account of all she had witnessed during the morning.

‘Well, my dear,’ observed Madame d’Epplen, with a smile, ‘all I can say is, that you are now as great a rebel as your sister—downrightly Austrian! I always, however, thought it would be some one else, and not Hofer, who would change your political opinions.’

‘But are they changed,’ asked Hilda, ‘if I only say that I admire the man beyond measure? He is a hero, and perfectly sublime in his simplicity!’

‘At least,’ persisted Madame d’Epplen, ‘it is something like a change to say more than ever Doris said!’

‘Not more than I have thought, interposed

Doris, 'though perhaps my admiration is less personal than Hilda's. I think the whole insurrection sublime, and every Tiroler who has taken up arms a hero! Never was a revolt more purely loyal, and no one has a right to brand with the name of rebellion this effort of the Tiroleans to restore their lost province to its true owner, and ensure a return to the paternal sway of their much-loved Emperor.'

'In point of fact, Doris, you are right,' said Hilda; 'they are not rebels in the common sense of the word.'

'Not in any sense of it,' rejoined Doris.

Madame d'Epplen raised her hands and waved them, to signify that further discussion was unnecessary.'

'It is all to no purpose,' she said; 'their Emperor cannot resist France backed by all Europe!'

'Excuse me,' said Doris, 'but England, at least, is Austria's ally.'

'Yes, my dear; and if ships could be sent to Vienna, it might be to some purpose just now; otherwise, a peace is certain—perhaps actually concluded by this time.'

'Are you sure?—have you heard——?' began Doris.

'I have received a letter from Epplen, written

immediately after he had had an interview with one of your peasant-heroes, Speckbacher, and tried to persuade him to induce his countrymen to lay down their arms and return to their homes, now that the war is in fact ended, and a powerful army on the march into Tirol. Epplen's letter to me was sent open under cover to Hofer,* perhaps in the hope that the arguments used in vain to Speckbacher might make some impression on him; but the untoward arrival of these men with the chain and medal has made him and his followers deaf to reason.'

'Did you allow Emmeran to read Colonel d'Epplen's letter?' asked Doris.

'Yes, and he has now so little doubt of peace and our speedy release, that he intends to urge you and your mother to go to Meran without further delay.'

Hilda knocked with her parasol on the wall of the room, then opened the window and leaned out with Doris, just in time to encounter Emmeran's head protruded in the same manner from the adjacent room. A long conversation ensued, in which he strongly pointed out the advantages of a removal to Meran, and the necessity of change of air and tranquillity for his aunt.

* Fact.

‘And you?’ asked Doris—‘what is to become of you?’

‘I shall undoubtedly obtain my liberty with the other prisoners,’ he answered; ‘and a peace is so certain, Doris, that I can almost promise you shall never again see me in the uniform which you once very justly observed I did not know how to wear.’

‘I have rather changed my mind on that subject,’ said Doris.

‘Nevertheless,’ he rejoined, ‘I hope you still prefer seeing me in the morning or evening coat, or even the shooting-jacket, which I am likely to wear in future.’

‘Wear any coat you please,’ said Doris, smiling; ‘but pray forget my foolish speech about the uniform.’

Her mother, who had been reading Colonel d’Epplen’s letter, now joined them, and was soon persuaded by Emmeran to decide on a removal to Meran while the journey could be made without impediment.

‘It is very unselfish of him to advise you to leave Innsbruck,’ observed Madame d’Epplen; ‘for, to judge by myself, I can imagine how much he will miss your daily visits.’

‘Perhaps,’ said Hilda, ‘you will follow us to Meran, as he intends to do?’

‘Rather let me hope,’ she replied, laughingly, ‘that you will before long follow me to Bavaria, instead of making pilgrimages to Hofer’s valley and visiting your hero of “The Sands,” as I am quite sure you propose doing when at Meran.’

‘And why should she not?’ asked Doris. ‘The “Sands” will very probably become a place of pilgrimage for others as well as Hilda. But if indeed a peace be so certain as Colonel d’Epplen seems to think, I wish Hofer could be persuaded to go home at once, and not expose himself and his countrymen to unnecessary danger.’

‘I wish he would,’ said Madame d’Epplen; ‘but who could expect him to listen to such a proposal now?’

‘No one, I suppose,’ answered Doris, with a sigh, ‘but still you may as well send him Colonel d’Epplen’s letter.’

‘Take it to him yourself,’ said Madame d’Epplen, placing the letter in her hand; ‘you never tried your power of persuasion in a better cause.’

It was late in the afternoon when they left the palace, and on passing the house of a friend in the neighbourhood, they were induced to accept an invitation to supper, given from an open window and urged by youthful emissaries sent to conduct them upstairs. This caused such a delay in their

return home, that when they again entered the streets they found the lamps lighted, and soon after perceived Andrew Hofer standing beneath one of them, as it hung suspended on a chain between the houses. He was endeavouring by the dim red light to read a letter, while a friend who stood near loudly and eagerly expostulated with him for having left the theatre during a performance intended to do him honour.

‘Now, Doris,’ whispered Hilda, as she walked on with her mother, ‘don’t lose this opportunity of giving him Colonel d’Epplen’s letter.’

And Doris, pushing aside her veil that he might recognize her, walked into the middle of the street just in time to hear him say, ‘How can I enjoy these honours when I know our cause is not prospering in other parts of the country!’*

Doris hesitated; Hofer, however, had already observed the letter, and extended his hand to take it.

‘From Colonel d’Epplen’ she began, but, perceiving traces of agitation in his face and tears in his eyes, instead of attempting an explanation she turned away and hurried after her mother and sister.

* Hofer’s words, when standing that evening beneath a lamp in one of the streets of Innsbruck.

‘A short conference!’ observed Hilda; ‘may I hope it has been to some purpose, and that I shall see my bearded hero at the Sands before long?’

‘Perhaps so,’ answered Doris gravely; he has evidently just received some depressing intelligence, and therefore the letter may have some influence on his decision. I am now myself quite disheartened, and begin to fear that this insurrection, with all its enthusiasm, loyalty, and patriotism, will only have the deplorable result of bringing those concerned in it into deep affliction, if not actual ruin.’

‘No,’ said Hilda; ‘if they disperse and deliver up their arms, they have nothing to fear. For the leaders, indeed, there may be personal danger, and, as far as Hofer is concerned, I can more than share your anxiety, because my interest is more concentrated in him than yours has ever been.’

‘My interest is alike for all,’ answered Doris; ‘and as it is evident they must yield in the end, we can only hope they will do so when convinced that peace is inevitable. I would rather this insurrection ended voluntarily, than see it subdued by force of arms; and even you, Hilda, must desire this, if only for Hofer’s sake!’

‘Of course I do,’ said Hilda; ‘and if it be any consolation to you, Doris, I will also confess that I

now agree with you not only about Tirol, but also in deeply regretting that this war has ended fatally for Austria. Never again will I quarrel with you or Frank about Napoleon; he had no right to bestow Spain on his brother, or Naples on his brother-in-law; and I wish to Heaven he had never burthened Bavaria with Tirol, and made us, as Emmeran says, his gatekeepers to Italy! If such thoughts and words be rebellion, Doris, Madame d'Epplen was right when she called me as great a rebel as you are!

CHAPTER XVI.

NEAR AND APART.

MERAN, once the chief city and residence of the Counts of Tirol, was in the year 1809 what it is now, a small town which, though containing a considerable number of houses, had but one long regular street. This street, however, has at each side open arcades, that afford acceptable shelter in winter, agreeable shade in summer, and at all seasons an amusing if not useful walk, as it is there that the principal shops are clustered, which serve as attraction alike to loungers and purchasers. The church is large, the steeple the highest in Tirol, and, as Dr. Ludwig Steub observes, in his equally instructive and entertaining work, 'Three Summers in Tirol,' 'In this steeple there are seven well-tuned melodious bells, rung in loud-sounding chords by sextons who are, in this respect, probably the most hard-working in the world. Nowhere in Germany can we hear such artistical chimes as in Meran, when on holi-

days they ring the changes with pauses that strain the attention, solemn solos, gay duets, astounding unisons, and so forth. The towns most proud of their chimes in England can find a rival here ; and the "Steeple and Bell-ringing Society of Meran" may, without hesitation, challenge the "Lancashire Bell-ringing Club" !

The town has a much-frequented public walk, on a quay built to prevent the inundations of the river Passer, and the view from it is as charming a mixture of German and Italian scenery as can well be imagined : high mountains and vineyard-covered hills, old castles and picturesque cottages, ruined towers, and villas of southern architecture. But it is to the village of Obermais, situated on the Naif mountain, immediately beyond and above the town, that I would direct the reader's attention, for it is there that Doris, Hilda, and their mother had, with some difficulty, procured lodgings for the autumn. Not that Meran at that time was, as now, a fashionable refuge for invalids—the grape cure was then unknown—but the war had filled every tranquil place with wounded soldiers, and both the houses in the town and the old castles of Obermais were filled with them in different stages of convalescence. For this reason the Waldering family were obliged to be satisfied

with a very limited number of rooms in a house belonging to the Saint George miller, close to his mill and to the church that gave it its name.

Before long they began to discover that the view from the windows was quite as beautiful as it had been in their former lodgings; they were also within walking distance of all their favourite haunts, and had there not been so many invalid officers, not only at the mill but even in the upper rooms of the house they inhabited, they would have been perfectly satisfied. 'Not,' as Hilda observed, 'not that these officers are at all in our way, poor men! but one cannot well use either pianoforte or harp as long as they remain here, and I never felt so musical in all my life.'

'You would like to sing some of Frank's favourite songs?' suggested her mother.

'Yes,' said Hilda; 'ever since I received his letter yesterday, I have been longing to tune the harp and realize the picture he drew of our supposed occupations.'

'Well,' said her mother, 'I should think that as most of these invalids are able to walk about, they are no longer likely to be disturbed by a little noise at reasonable, rational hours.'

'But,' began Hilda, 'but those two at the mill who are said to be so frightfully mutilated?'

‘They are too far distant to hear you when the windows are closed,’ said her mother, ‘and, without flattery, we may suppose that the sound of the harp, played either by you or Doris, is more agreeable than the noises which they must hear continually when living in the mill itself.’

Hilda walked straight to the harp, drew off the leather cover, and perceived, to her infinite astonishment, that not one string was broken, and the instrument itself almost perfectly in tune! ‘Doris,’ she exclaimed, ‘is not this completely unaccountable?’

‘No,’ answered Doris, smiling; ‘it only betrays my having had less consideration for these invalids than you; in fact I forgot them altogether the only afternoon I chanced to be alone in this room, and not only tuned the harp but played all the Irish, Scotch, and Welsh airs I could remember by heart; you may therefore imagine my qualms of conscience just now when you mentioned why you resisted a temptation to which I yielded without a moment’s hesitation.’

‘I shall resist no longer,’ said Hilda, commencing a brilliant prelude, from which she afterwards modulated into a succession of melodies that Frank had often requested her to play because they reminded him of his boyhood and Garvagh.

At length she stopped suddenly, and seemed to speak a continuation of her thoughts when she observed, 'It is odd he took no notice of my having mentioned that we had seen Madame de Bereny on the quay and at the bookseller's.'

'May I ask in what manner you mentioned her?' said Doris, with a smile full of meaning.

'You are mistaken this time,' replied Hilda, more in answer to her sister's looks than words. 'I did not betray my disgust at her flirting even in her widow's weeds—I merely mentioned that she seemed much admired, and was always surrounded by a swarm of men.'

'In your place,' said Doris, 'I should have mentioned her without comment, or—not at all.'

'Of course, Doris, you would have done whatever was most judicious, but I only thought of proving to Frank that I was no longer jealous.'

'I fear,' said Doris, 'that what you wrote will not be a convincing proof to him, and his silence on the subject is almost a demonstration of doubt.'

'Then I will give him another proof,' said Hilda, rising and pushing the harp aside. 'I will call on Madame de Bereny—to-day—now—without delay.'

'Stay, Hilda!' cried Doris, eagerly; 'do not act

on the impulse of the moment and commence an acquaintance with a woman to whom you feel so decided an antipathy. When your visiting her would have been a concession to Frank, I urged you to do so; but now that you are on such perfectly good terms with him, I think the effort unnecessary if he do not again make the request.'

'He will never make it,' said Hilda; 'and I even feel certain that were he here now he would avoid her rather than quarrel with me again; but I must convince him that I am no longer jealous.'

'Do you know,' said Doris, gravely, 'that this very effort on your part to prove you are not jealous almost makes me suspect that you are so still?'

'If I am,' answered Hilda, 'it is jealousy of the past, and Frank must not be allowed to suppose me capable of such folly. I shall visit Madame de Bereny, Doris, and hope you and my mother will go with me.'

They made no objection to accompany her, although both entertained a secret prejudice against the woman whose society and flattering regard had possibly tended to prolong Frank's estrangement from them all. Madame de Bereny

received them with evident pleasure; and during their short visit they had the satisfaction of discovering that she was less young, less handsome, and infinitely less fascinating than they had expected to find her.

‘Yet she is an interesting-looking person,’ observed Hilda, magnanimously, as they walked homewards and approached the mill by the footpath from the river; ‘decidedly interesting; and her manners might be called engaging if they were not so studied. I am sure she would make a good actress, or *pose* herself gracefully in a *tableau*,—and, in fact, she might have been supposed sitting for her picture at any moment while we were with her. I never saw a black veil so judiciously worn.’

Neither her mother nor sister answered; they were looking straight before them, and seemed to hesitate whether or not they should proceed.

‘Pray go on,’ said Hilda, following the direction of their eyes towards a couple of wounded officers who were lying beneath some trees near the mill, one of them stretched on a mattress evidently in a dying state, the other in little better plight, reclining on the grass beside him, and greatly disfigured, not only by the bandages of his wounds, but also by a thick black beard

that completely covered the lower part of his face, leaving only a thin transparent nose and the upper part of his livid cheeks visible.

‘Pray go on,’ she repeated; ‘they have already seen us, and we must neither hesitate nor let them perceive that we are shocked at their appearance.’

The wish to seem unobservant made Hilda and Doris look beyond the invalids, towards the windows of their drawing-room, as if in expectation of seeing something particularly interesting in that direction; but great was their surprise when they actually did discover the figure of a man standing at one of them, evidently watching for and awaiting their return.

‘It is Frank!’ cried Hilda, springing joyously forward; ‘I know him by the way he waves his hat!’ And in a moment she was out of sight in the vineyard.

‘If he had been a little less energetic in his movements,’ said Doris, ‘I should have mistaken him for Emmeran.’

‘Very naturally,’ said her mother; ‘but for many reasons we must rejoice that it is Frank.’

‘Of course,’ replied Doris, quietly; ‘but now that the war is at an end, I am quite sure that Emmeran will come home as soon as he can.’

‘Doris—you are right—it is indeed Emmeran!’ said her mother, as the latter strode down the hill towards them; ‘but, oh! what a disappointment to poor Hilda! and just when a surprise and meeting of this kind might have set all to rights without explanation, and you, I know, would not in the least have minded waiting a week or two longer!’

Doris did not stop to acquiesce in or contradict this last supposition; she advanced rapidly to meet Emmeran, who as he drew her towards him whispered, ‘I have but a very short time to stay here, Doris; may I not hope that you will return with me to Westenried?’

The wounded officers had been near enough to understand what had occurred; they raised themselves on their elbows to look after the retreating figures, and as one of them soon after sank back exhausted on his mattress, he observed with a faint smile, ‘I am sorry that girl who first ran past us was disappointed; she seemed so agitated and overjoyed that I suspect the shock must have been great when she discovered her mistake!’

The fact was, that Hilda no sooner perceived and knew Emmeran than, utterly unable to welcome him, she darted off under the arches of the vines, and sought a place where she could yield

without restraint to her feelings and shed tears of bitter disappointment. She afterwards explained the cause of her abrupt flight to Emmeran, laughed at the chance of her having still longer mistaken him for Frank, and then appeared to think no more about the matter.

But she did think of it and of Frank incessantly during the evening, and felt so restless that on perceiving her mother reading intently, and Emmeran successfully engrossing her sister's attention, she left the drawing-room, and sauntered through the still open hall-door into the vineyard.

For more than an hour she walked beneath the rude trellis-work over which the vines were trained, until at length the moonlight tempted her to leave the shade, and seat herself on a wooden bench placed at the side of the house, whence she could look into the valley beneath and see the beautifully situated town, and the dark mountains beyond it. Her contemplations were long undisturbed, and the silence around her became by degrees so profound that she actually started on hearing the sound of Doris's harp. For a while she listened, but then stood up, conscious alike that the course of her thoughts had been irretrievably interrupted and that it was

time to return to the drawing-room if she did not wish her long absence to be remarked.

Hilda entered the house, but was tempted by the open window at the end of the corridor to look once more at the moonlit landscape. She leaned out, supporting herself on the window-frame with both hands, while her eyes glanced keenly along the outline of the mountains, then over the vine-clad hills, and rested on the picturesque tower between the town and the ruin of the fortress Saint Zensburg. The intervening valley and ascent to the mill she scarcely observed; but a dark object at no great distance from the house instantly attracted her attention; it was the figure of a man leaning against the trunk of one of the standard peach-trees in the orchard, and so slight was the shade it afforded him that the moon lighted every fold of the cloak thrown over his shoulders, and fell full upon a face pale as that of a corpse. Hilda's stifled exclamation of surprise, or rather alarm, may have been heard by him, for his eyes, hitherto fixed intently on the window of the drawing-room, turned slowly towards her, and she drew back horror-struck on perceiving in both figure and face an appalling resemblance to the apparition

she had seen many years previously in the vault of the Chapel-island.

‘Doris!—Emmeran!—’ she gasped; but the tones of the harp overpowered her voice, and she precipitately retreated to the drawing-room door, and threw it wide open.

‘Good heavens!—what is the matter?’ cried Doris, starting up in alarm.

‘Oh, come!—oh, come!—he is there—under the tree——’

‘Who?’

‘The bearded hussar—just as I saw him in the glass on Holy-eve—with the black bandage across his forehead, and the braided jacket—Oh, do come with me—or look out of the window here, and you will see him distinctly.’

Emmeran rushed to the window, but was not very adroit in opening it, and Hilda’s trembling fingers rather impeded than aided him; it therefore so happened that when they all looked eagerly into the orchard there was no trace of the mysterious hussar, and Hilda could only point to the peach-tree, and say, ‘He was there—I saw him as distinctly—no, far more distinctly than in the mirror—and I am certain, quite certain, it was the—the—very same——’ She hesitated.

‘The same what?’ asked Emmeran.

‘Person — vision — apparition — whatever you choose to call it,’ she answered, with ill-concealed agitation, and eyes still fixed on the trees of the orchard.

‘My dear Hilda,’ said her mother, ‘the apparition of the vault was an illusion, and that of to-night merely a wounded officer from the mill! I remarked to-day that one of them had a prodigious beard, and as well as I can recollect his head was bandaged and his arm in a sling.’

‘You may be right,’ said Hilda, taking a long breath, and seating herself near the window; ‘but to say the least, the strong resemblance to what I saw in the mirror is very singular.’

‘It is more singular,’ said her mother, ‘that the likeness did not strike you when we passed him on our way home to-day.’

‘I did not look at him,’ answered Hilda; ‘but even if I had, perhaps I might have required the moonlight to rouse my memory. At all events I must say that I wish either he would leave the mill or we could find apartments in another house.’

‘Is it possible,’ said Doris, ‘that you have any superstitious dread of the unfortunate man?’

‘Something very like it,’ replied Hilda; ‘but

as we are in a manner compelled to remain here for the present, and he is not likely to leave Meran, I can do nothing but keep out of his way as much as possible, and when we chance to meet avoid looking at him.'

'You need not give yourself much trouble,' observed her mother, 'for he has hitherto apparently avoided us, and turned away his head so obviously to-day that I think he rather shrinks from being seen by any one. He may perhaps have been a very handsome man, and has now a morbid fear of people seeing him in his present decrepit and unprepossessing state.'

'I am sure,' said Hilda, 'if it were not for this unfortunate resemblance, his appearance would in no way be repulsive to me. You know, Emmeran,' she added, smiling, 'I liked you quite as well, and Doris far better than ever, when you were wounded, though certainly that straw-coloured beard that you allowed to grow for some weeks was even less becoming than my spectre's black one!'

'Suppose,' said Emmeran, 'I try to get acquainted with this man in order to request him to shave?'

'It would make no difference,' she answered, gravely; 'his wounded forehead requires a ban-

dage, his arm is in a sling, and the recollection of the tarnished gold I saw on the sleeve of his jacket to-night would still make him in my eyes the hussar of the Chapel-island, and, as such, an object of dread. I wish I had seen him by daylight, or not at all.'

'So do I,' said her mother; 'but I trust when you have seen him oftener the impression will wear off.'

'I do not intend to look at him again,' she answered; 'and hope that Emmeran will neither in jest nor earnest make any attempt to become acquainted with him.'

'I have not time for anything of the kind at present,' said Emmeran, laughing; 'but even if it were otherwise, I should be at a loss for a pretext, now that you say his shaving off his beard would give you no satisfaction. For my part, I think we ought to rejoice that this same beard is of real tangible shaveable hair.'

'What else could it be?' asked Hilda.

'The unreal beard of a spectre *selon les règles*,' he answered, solemnly; 'and if you did not admit the possibility of his shaving, we might be led to suppose the orchard, and perhaps the mill and its appurtenances—haunted.'

A discussion of spectres, apparitions, visions,

and wonderful dreams followed, as a matter of course, and continued until they retired for the night. Then Hilda, long after the others were asleep, walked up and down her room, recalling with torturing minuteness all the ghost stories she had ever heard or read, and comparing them with her own Holy-Eve experience. Why she afterwards went to the window to take another look at the haunted orchard it would be hard to say, but she did so, and was rewarded for her courage by again seeing the spectre of the vault apparently gazing upwards at the window of her room. She did not again call her sister, or draw back in alarm; on the contrary, she not only compelled herself to look down, but even made an effort to open the window. The moment, however, he perceived the movement of the curtain, he turned away and limped slowly towards the mill.

‘My mother was right,’ she murmured, with a sigh of relief; ‘it is indeed one of these officers, though what can induce him to wander about at this hour it would be difficult to comprehend. How ill I have kept my resolution of not looking at him again. But I am glad I have had this opportunity of convincing myself that he is—what he is! Perhaps I can now sleep without dreaming of him.’

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW EMMERAN WAS REMINDED TO BUY
WEDDING-RINGS.

MADAME DE BERENY called on the ensuing day, apparently attracted in an unusual manner towards Hilda and her family, and determined to overcome any prejudices which she may have suspected they entertained against her. When she rose to take leave, she looked alternately from Doris to Hilda, hesitated for a moment, and then said: 'You resemble each other so much more than I expected, that I find it difficult to decide which is the "cousin," and which the "wife," of whom I have heard so much.'

This was the first allusion that had been made to Frank, and Madame de Bereny, instantly perceiving the effect of her words, required no explanation to enable her to distinguish the smiling 'cousin' from the deeply blushing 'wife.'

'Have you heard from Colonel O'More lately?' she asked, turning at once to Hilda.

‘Yes, the day before yesterday.’

‘And how is he?’

‘Quite well, thank you.’

‘Does he write in good spirits?’

‘Very much so.’

‘Then you may be sure he has got the Theresian Cross at last! I always thought he would, but feared he might lose his life in the effort to obtain it.’

Hilda forced a smile, though her mortification at Frank’s not having allowed her to participate in his hopes on this occasion was so intense that she answered almost resentfully, ‘I have no doubt that he perilled his life, but thank Goodness he has not lost it for such a bauble!’

‘Bauble?’ repeated Madame de Bereny. ‘Do not ever let him hear you use such a word when speaking of his Theresian Cross. Surely you must be aware that it is the greatest of military honours, only to be obtained by some act of successful heroism producing results of acknowledged importance? And you may be quite sure that he will think more of this “bauble” as you call it, than of having received the command of his regiment. I know if any one I loved had a chance of this decoration, I should hardly be able to think or speak of anything else! May I hope that you

will write or send me word as soon as you obtain any certain information on the subject ?’

Hilda slightly bowed her head and answered, ‘I am sure Frank would feel immensely flattered if he knew the interest you take in his affairs.’

‘He knows it perfectly well,’ said Madame de Bereny, a little piqued at her haughty manner; ‘it is quite unnecessary to tell Frank O’More how much I like and admire him !’

Hilda’s colour mounted to her temples, but, before she could answer, Doris interposed. ‘Every one likes and admires Frank,’ she said quickly, ‘and nothing can give my sister greater pleasure than hearing that people do so ; we only fear he knows it too well, and suspect if it were not for us he would be completely spoiled.’

‘He told me,’ said Madame de Bereny, ‘that “cousin Doris” kept him in great order, but he seemed to like her all the better for it.’

‘Then I hope,’ answered Doris gaily, ‘you also kept him in order, though I cannot remember that he ever said so.’

‘What *did* he say of me ?’ she asked with evident interest.

Doris hesitated before she replied : ‘He spoke with much gratitude of your and Colonel de Bereny’s hospitality.’

‘Was that all?’ said Madame de Bereny, ‘I hoped it was to his eulogiums and personal esteem I owed the pleasure of becoming acquainted with you.’

Doris knew not what to say, and looked towards her sister for assistance.

‘In fact,’ said Hilda, with a slightly ironical smile, ‘there is no doubt that he found your society singularly attractive, for he acknowledged that he was every day and all day in your house.’

At this moment their mother entered the room—she had just returned from a walk in one of the neighbouring vineyards—and immediately invited Madame de Bereny to remain to ‘*marende*,’ a sort of afternoon luncheon usual in Tirol. But the invitation was politely declined, Madame de Bereny saying, she feared the delay might oblige her to return home in a storm that had been threatening for some hours, and, the sound of distant thunder confirming her words, she drew her shawl round her and walked towards the door.

Emmeran, who had been present during the greater part of her visit, immediately proposed accompanying her to the town, and his escort was accepted with a smile that lit up her whole countenance, and gave it at once both youth and beauty.

Hilda walked to the window, looked after them, and then exclaimed,—‘Doris, do come here! She has taken his arm and is leaning upon it as if she were descending a precipitous mountain!’

‘Why not?’ said Doris, ‘when he proposed himself as walking-stick?’

‘And now she is giving him her parasol to carry.’

Doris laughed.

‘Is it possible,’ cried Hilda, ‘that her coquetry amuses you? or did you really not observe her efforts to attract Emmeran’s attention and draw him into conversation almost all the time she was here?’

‘I observed,’ answered Doris, smiling archly, ‘that Emmeran was very willing both to be attracted and drawn into conversation, and I was extremely glad of it, for you were so much less agreeable than usual, or rather so unlike yourself, that your presence at last became absolutely a restraint on me.’

‘My presence a restraint?’ repeated Hilda.

‘Yes, dear; for I should have liked to have made her talk of Frank, but the fear of irritating you or giving you an opportunity of making sarcastic little speeches prevented me.’

‘And yet,’ said Hilda, ‘I really tried to like

her, and partly succeeded, until her manner to Emmeran convinced me that she is one of those women who can only find pleasure in the society of men, and never relax in their efforts to captivate them.'

'I confess,' said Doris, 'that I too liked her better before than after Emmeran joined us; nevertheless her nearly total disregard of us afterwards, and determination to make him talk, were very amusing.'

'Be candid, Doris, and say at once you perceived her effort to attract him, and disapproved of it.'

'I had not arrived at disapprobation,' said Doris, 'on the contrary, I could not help admiring her quickness in discovering the way to please him, and the consummate skill with which she managed to put him into perfect good humour with himself, consequently with her also, and perhaps with all the world.'

'Well, Doris, as *you* don't seem to mind her finding out the way to please him, of course I can have no objection; on the contrary, if you would not think me very ill-natured, I should rather like him to be subject to her wiles, just long enough—to make you jealous for five short minutes!'

Doris shook her head. 'Madame de Bereny

could not make me jealous for five short seconds,' she said quietly.

'The fact is,' said Hilda, a little impatiently, 'you have never cared enough for any man to know even the meaning of the word.'

'In the present instance,' said Doris, 'I am sufficiently convinced of Emmeran's affection to have no sort of objection to his finding other women as handsome or as agreeable as they really happen to be.'

'Now,' said Hilda, 'although I perceive by my mother's face that you have spoken reasonably and rightly, you must allow me to doubt the warmth of your affection for him if you can really feel so very indifferent on this subject.'

'You are unjust,' replied Doris, smiling; 'my affection may be of a colder description than yours, but it is strong and not much subject to change of any kind.'

'Doris,' said Hilda, bending over her sister's chair until their faces touched each other, 'your affection is perfect as far as your relations and friends are concerned, but surely you feel something more for Emmeran, to whom you are about to be married so very soon?'

'I feel,' said Doris, 'that I cannot give a more convincing proof of affection than having con-

sented to pass the rest of my life with him, and I believe he is reasonable enough to be satisfied.'

'I may as well be so too,' said Hilda, laughing, 'for this is one of the subjects that I know you will not discuss with any one.'

Doris nodded her head, and the conversation ended.

The storm passed over, the rain ceased, and after a sunset in brilliant clouds, the moon rose so bright and clear that Doris, Hilda, and their mother were tempted into the vineyard, and were walking there when Emmeran sauntered sedately towards them.

'We don't mind your having supped with Madame de Bereny,' said Hilda, glancing laughingly towards her sister.

'I have had no supper,' he replied.

'Nor,' she continued, in the same tone, 'nor have we any objection to your finding her as handsome or as agreeable as she really happens to be.'

'That is fortunate,' he answered, 'for she is undoubtedly both the one and the other.'

'Indeed?'

'Decidedly; as well as I can judge during a short morning visit, and still shorter walk into Meran.'

‘Perhaps also in her own house?’ suggested Hilda.

‘I was not in it.’

‘Then where were you all this time?’ she asked, with some amazement.

‘Tell Doris to question me and you shall hear my adventures,’ he answered, seating himself on the bench before the house.

Doris sat down beside him, but her question was, ‘Shall we not first desire Janet to order you some supper?’

‘I have already sent a message to that effect,’ he answered, smiling, ‘and as Hilda will fancy I have fallen in love with Madame de Bereny if I do not satisfactorily account for every quarter of an hour of my absence, I must tell you that I urged your fair visitor, without any sort of ceremony, to walk more quickly than she perhaps ever did before in her life.’

‘We saw you carefully supporting her down the hill,’ observed Hilda.

‘And you might afterwards have seen me almost carrying her over the bridge,’ he answered. ‘The wind there nearly took her off her feet, and blew us both about in a most disagreeable manner; we afterwards actually ran into the town, and only recovered our breath under the arcades.’

‘And you call that an adventure?’ said Hilda.

‘No, that was only the beginning; we walked under the shelter of the arcades until the first violent torrents of rain were over, and then I conducted Madame de Bereny to her lodgings.’

‘Well, go on,’ she said, perceiving that he paused.

‘On my way home afterwards,’ he continued, ‘I had reached the mill and was walking quickly past it when some of the people there rushed out, and in a very incoherent manner informed me that one of the Hungarian officers lodging in their house had just died in a most sudden and unexpected manner.’

‘Which of them?’ asked Hilda, quickly.

‘Not the one you have seen,’ he answered, very gravely; ‘it was a very young man who has only been here a couple of weeks.’

‘Are you sure—quite sure—there is no mistake?’

‘Yes, for the miller and his wife requested me to visit “their Colonel” as they called the other. It seems he had insisted on their procuring him a horse to ride into the town that he might find out the address of a certain Protestant clergyman who had visited him here some time ago, but had since gone to Botzen; they hoped I would undertake

the commission and not let him attempt what would be so dangerous for him, as he had already nearly bled to death twice since he came to the mill.'

'Nearly bled to death!' repeated Hilda. 'No wonder he looks so ghastly pale!'

'No wonder, indeed!' said Emmeran, thoughtfully; 'but his chief illness now appears to be weakness.'

'Then,' said Doris, 'he only requires to be taken good care of, and I hope he has a servant who is attached to him.'

'They told me,' answered Emmeran, 'that he had one when he first came to Meran, but suddenly sent him back to his regiment about the time you came here, and injudiciously supplied his place with the son of a peasant—a mere boy, who could not even tell me his master's name!'

'You inquired, of course, before you went upstairs?'

'I asked a few questions, which were very unsatisfactorily answered; and the only thing I discovered was, that every one at the mill was more or less charmed with this colonel, in spite of the elf locks, cadaverous appearance, and bandaged head that so horrified Hilda.'

‘I am sure,’ said Doris, ‘if Hilda could manage to see him by daylight, she would discover that the chief resemblance to her apparition consisted in the pale face and black beard.’

‘She is not likely to see him by daylight,’ answered Emmeran, evasively, ‘as he greatly dislikes being observed by any one; and the people at the mill say that for this reason he has latterly only gone out late in the evening or at night.’

‘I begin to feel interested about him,’ said Doris, ‘and am curious to hear what occurred when you gained admittance to his room.’

‘I first sent up my name and offered my services,’ he continued, ‘and after some demur he consented to see me.’

Here Emmeran paused.

‘Well,’ said Doris, ‘and then you went upstairs and saw him?’

‘Not exactly; for he did not immediately enter the room to which I had been conducted, but through the partly open door into the adjoining apartment I perceived that he was standing by the bed and closing the eyes of his dead comrade.’

Emmeran paused again.

‘You waited, of course?’ said Doris.

‘Yes—I waited—long—but at length he turned round, opened the door, and came towards me.’

‘And immediately accepted your offer?’

‘Yes—no—that is, I forget exactly what he said or I said at first—I looked at his bandaged head and wounded arm and stiff leg, poor fellow—and I—I thought of Hilda and the vault—and—in short, I never was so shocked in all my life!’

‘Then he does resemble the apparition?’ said Hilda, starting up. ‘And how great must be the likeness when it struck even you so forcibly! Oh, mother, I do wish you could be induced to spend the winter elsewhere! Only think of having this man so near us for months!’

‘But,’ said her mother, ‘would not a removal from the immediate neighbourhood of the mill answer our purpose just as well? It is not probable that he will follow us into the town, should we go there.’

‘Stay!’ said Emmeran. ‘I have spoken very unguardedly, and did not intend to say so much. That this man resembles the description Hilda gave of the apparition I cannot deny, but I imagine that many other wounded officers would do so quite as accurately; and were this one to take off his black bandage, and shave off even

part of his beard, I am convinced the annoying likeness would be destroyed at once.'

'He would still be the same man,' said Hilda; 'and I feel an unconquerable dread of his having some mysterious influence over my destiny. Laugh at me as much as you please, Emmeran, but I cannot overcome this feeling.'

Emmeran did not laugh, or even smile, and it was with a sort of forced cheerfulness that he answered, 'Let us rather say no more about the matter. I have only to conclude my account of myself by telling you that I undertook to find out the address of the Protestant clergyman, and was successful; the letter now on its way to Botzen will probably bring him to Meran the day after to-morrow, and I have been thinking, Doris, we might as well take advantage of his being here, and ask him to perform the Protestant marriage ceremony for us?'

'I hope, however,' said Doris, 'you will defer your request to him until his services are no longer required by others.'

'I hope so too,' said Hilda; 'for, as it is, you bring death and marriage strangely in contrast.'

'I acknowledge,' said Emmeran, 'that I rather expected Hilda to oppose my plan for this very reason; but,' he added, turning to her, 'but you

really must begin to restrain this inclination to superstitious thoughts on all occasions, or you will cause yourself, and perhaps others, much unnecessary uneasiness.'

'You are quite right,' answered Hilda, 'and I would make the effort if it were possible to forget that unlucky Holy-eve, and all that occurred afterwards in the cathedral at Ulm to remind me of it.'

'The best cure,' suggested Emmeran, 'would be our finding out that some one had actually managed to conceal himself in the vault that night.'

Hilda, who had latterly been walking backwards and forwards before them, now stopped, and, fixing her eyes on Emmeran, asked eagerly, 'Were you there?'

'No—but it may have been Frank; for, as well as I can recollect, you never asked either of us the question in direct words.'

'And how,' asked Hilda, 'how do you account for the ring that came to light so unexpectedly?'

'I forgot the ring completely,' he answered, thoughtfully; 'but I dare say it could be accounted for in an equally rational manner.'

'Let us,' said Hilda, a little ironically, 'let us, for instance, suppose you threw it slyly on the

ground that it might there be found—but still you will have no objection, I should think, to Doris's procuring one for you in a more satisfactory manner?'

'Thank you at least for the hint,' answered Emmeran, laughing. 'I shall buy both my own ring and Doris's in Meran to-morrow.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCENE CHANGES.

DORIS's marriage, or rather her marriages, took place three days later; the first in all the quiet privacy of a small drawing-room, the second in the St. George's Catholic Church near the mill. The Waldering family walked in a perfectly unostentatious manner through part of the vineyard and orchard to the church, and were not a little surprised to find it so crowded with peasants that they and their friends found some difficulty in reaching the altar.

That Doris was dressed in white, with flowing veil and chaplet of myrtle and orange blossom, was a matter of course; that Hilda appeared in a dress of precisely the same material, with merely a wreath of green leaves on her head, stamped her at once as bridesmaid in the minds of the admiring spectators.

Now Hilda's wreath was composed of tastefully arranged willow-leaves, and instantly attracted

the attention of a man who stood outside the church, his straw hat drawn down over his bandaged forehead, his figure concealed by a long cloak, and the deep interest he felt in the marriage taking place made manifest by his eager glance and quick, hard breathing.

‘ In the Roman Catholic Church marriage is a sacrament, and the upturned eyes and moving lips of the greater part of the congregation soon proved that if they had come to gaze, they remained to pray; and when the venerable priest, with his long snow-white hair, ruddy cheeks, and mild blue eyes, encircled Emmeran’s and Doris’s hands with the stole, and pronounced the solemn words, ‘ *Conjuncto vos,*’ the assembled peasants with a loud simultaneous movement sank on their knees, unconscious of the deep impression which their prostrate figures made on the one sad spectator who continued to stand, or rather lean, in rigid helplessness against the side of the doorway.

The autumn sun sent bright coloured rays through the painted glass windows on the bridal party as they waited for the crowd to disperse; but curiosity had again regained its place in the minds of the peasants,—they collected together, forming a lane, through which Emmeran instantly perceived that he and Doris were expected to pass

and submit to be stared at, and he therefore drew her arm within his and moved forward.

It has been observed that some people have an instantaneous consciousness of eyes fixed intently on them; and either for this reason, or in consequence of some slight impediment in passing the threshold of the church, Doris suddenly looked up and saw close to her the pallid, agitated face of the officer from the mill. Doubt, consternation, and dismay were successively reflected in her expressive features,—while a hectic flush that passed across the invalid's cheeks seemed suddenly to confirm her worst apprehensions, and she grasped Emmeran's arm in a vain endeavour to make him stop, or at least retard his progress. For the first time in her life she found him inattentive to her wishes; he even drew her forward after she found voice to gasp out the words, 'Wait—oh, wait a moment!' and he continued to stride on, though aware that her head was turned backwards, and nothing but his restraining hand prevented her from leaving his side.

'Emmeran!' she whispered, breathlessly, 'didn't you see him? Didn't you know him?'

'Yes, dearest; but you must restrain your feelings, both for his sake and for Hilda's—she must not be told that he is here.'

Doris made a great effort, and regained her self-possession so completely that when they reached the house she was able to speak to her friends, and make a plausible excuse for leaving them by expressing a desire to change her dress. Her heightened colour and flurried manner when whispering a few words to Emmeran as she passed him was so natural that it excited no attention, still less that he should afterwards sit down beside his charming sister-in-law, and assist her to do the honours of the breakfast table.

In the mean time Doris rushed up the stairs to her room, pulled the flowers and veil from her hair, threw a long grey travelling cloak over her shoulders, and, taking her bonnet in her hand, ran down the stairs and out of the house, not stopping for a moment until she found herself at the entrance of the mill. Fortunately the family were at their early dinner, and she was able to continue her journey uninterrupted to the part of the house in which the room she sought was situated.

She knocked with unhesitating impatience, and on receiving permission to enter sprang forward with a stifled cry of anguish, and threw herself on her knees beside the couch on which her wounded cousin lay. ‘Oh, Frank, what a meeting!—

what a parting is this!’ was all she could utter before her pent-up feelings found relief in a passionate burst of tears.

Frank’s lips quivered. ‘You know me, Doris—in spite of all disfigurement?’

She looked up for a moment, but immediately afterwards buried her head in the sofa cushion, and sobbed aloud.

‘I understand you,’ he said, gently; ‘I am indeed a frightful object to look at,—and it is for this reason that I have kept Hilda in ignorance of my present state.’

‘No, Frank,—no,—it is not that—I am—and she will be—far more afflicted now than had she heard the truth at a time when her fears would have served as preparation for the shock. Your letters—your cheerful letters have deceived us completely—cruelly.’

‘No, Doris, darling, there was no cruelty to you, or Hilda, or my aunt, in this concealment. It was at first said that I was mortally wounded, then I nearly died of fever. Suppose Hilda had proposed coming to me?’

‘You need not suppose,’ said Doris, raising her head and pushing back her dishevelled hair. ‘You may be quite sure she would have gone to you! And she will come to you now, and no

longer hesitate to tell you how devotedly she loves you!’

‘Not yet,’ said Frank, raising himself upright, while Doris seated herself on a footstool beside the sofa. ‘I cannot allow Hilda to be told either that I am here, or wounded, for I should doubt any demonstration of affection from her now, or at least not value it as I ought, from the suspicion that compassion alone prompted it! The thought is natural, Doris, after having so signally failed to overcome her pride at Innsbruck.’

‘Oh, Frank, how little you know Hilda’s, or any woman’s heart!’

‘I know yours,’ he said, bending down and looking into her overflowing eyes until his own filled with tears. ‘I know yours so well, Doris, that were I even torn to pieces by a cannon ball, like poor Louis d’Esterre, I could wish to see you without a moment’s fear that you would love me less.’

‘Has Louis been so dangerously wounded?’ asked Doris with compassionate interest.

‘He is dead!’ answered Frank, ‘and I must speak of his death, as he sent you a message which I promised to deliver to you.’

‘You were able to be of use to him?’ said Doris; ‘you consoled him in his last moments?’

‘N—o,’ said Frank, reluctantly, ‘I—saw him during the battle of Wagram lying under a tree in a state I dare not describe to you—in short, mortally wounded—and should not even have known him had he not called to me. I dismounted, and he requested me to take from him your miniature, of which he confessed he had possessed himself without permission at Ulm, and ever since worn next his heart. You must forgive him, Doris—he loved you more than you supposed, and desired me to tell you so with almost his last breath, poor fellow!’

‘Then you saw him die?’

‘He asked me to shoot him, Doris—asked me to put him out of torture that must end in death—but I was a coward and could not do it.’

‘And you were obliged to leave him in that state?’ said Doris, breathlessly.

‘No; he persuaded one of our men to have compassion on him. I only heard the shot, Doris, but felt as if the bullet had struck my own heart too. It was a mental wound that will never heal, that will bleed whenever it is touched, as long as I live!’

‘How horrible!’ murmured Doris, covering her face with her hands.

‘I wish I had not spoken of him,’ said Frank,

‘but unfortunately he was in my thoughts when you came into the room, for I had been considering how I could manage to send you the miniature that you might give it to Emmeran as a wedding present.’

‘It belongs to my mother,’ said Doris, ‘and if I give it to her now she will inevitably ask where I found it.’

‘Then,’ said Frank, ‘you must keep it yourself for the present, as I cannot give you permission to tell her. I wish I had resolution to leave the mill, but it is hard to resign the pleasure of sitting at this window and seeing Hilda so frequently, especially since my fears of being recognized by her have been nearly removed by Emmeran, who told me that she had resolved not to look at me again because I reminded her of the spectre she saw in the——’

At this moment a hasty step on the stairs, and immediately afterwards an unceremonious hand on the lock of the door, made Doris snatch up her bonnet from the floor; but before she had time to put it on her head Emmeran entered the room. ‘Doris,’ he said, half apologetically, ‘I was obliged to propose coming for you, or else Hilda would have gone to your room, discovered your absence, and the consequences might have been

fatal to Frank's secret. Have you told him that he will soon see us again?—that we return to Meran for the winter?’

‘I have not had time to speak of our plans,’ she answered; ‘but am now sorry we cannot remain here altogether, as you might have visited Frank daily, and even I could have managed to see and speak to him occasionally.’

‘We can do so when we come back,’ said Emmeran, cheerfully; ‘and in the mean time Frank must take care of himself, and grow strong and handsome again. I quite approve of his former, and can perfectly understand his present motives for concealment.’

‘I *can not*,’ said Doris; ‘and I am sure that Hilda would feel as I do, and only love him ten times better for all these wounds.’ While speaking she pushed aside the black bandage, raised the thick hair from his temple, and kissed repeatedly the still red scar she had exposed to view.

‘Farewell, Frank!’ she said, with difficulty restraining her tears. ‘Farewell!—but only for a few weeks. I do not think I can wait until winter to see you again.’

Frank stood up, embraced her in silence, looked after her as she left the room, and then

wrung Emmeran's hand without making an attempt to speak.

* * * * *

‘Emmeran, I cannot yet go to the drawing-room,’ said Doris, stopping at the foot of the staircase; ‘it would be impossible for me to think or speak of anything but Frank at present; but my not yet having changed my dress, and Janet requiring directions about packing, will serve to excuse me a little longer.’

The dress was changed, and Janet had carried off the wedding-garment, but still Doris lingered in her room, walking about uneasily for some time, until at last, throwing herself on her knees, she covered her face with her hands. It was so that Hilda found her at the end of half an hour, and though she stood up immediately, and forced a smile while listening to her sister's playful reproaches for having played truant so long, there was something in the expression of her face that made Hilda first hesitate, then stop suddenly, and at last, after a pause, exclaim, ‘Doris, what is the matter? Something dreadful has happened——’

‘It might have been worse,’ she answered,

turning away; 'but even as it is I hesitate to tell you.'

A horrible suspicion flashed through Hilda's mind; she put her arm round her sister, and whispered, 'You are not unhappy?—you do not repent your marriage——?'

'No, oh, no!' said Doris, quickly. 'It was not of myself that I have been thinking—it was of you and—of Frank.'

'Dear Doris, how very kind of you! But indeed you must not look so disheartened about us, as I have now not the slightest doubt that our next meeting will unite us for life. Will you not come downstairs? I fear if you remain here any longer our friends may think——'

'Never mind what they think!' exclaimed Doris, with such unusual impatience that Hilda was not only silenced, but so astonished that she gazed at her sister in stronger interrogation than many words could have expressed. And she was understood, for Doris soon continued: 'You may well be surprised, Hilda; but you must have patience for a few minutes. I have something that I wish to tell you—that I believe I must tell you, though I know I am not at liberty to do so. It is true,' she added, rather speaking to herself than her sister, 'it is true that no promise of

secrecy was exacted, and none made—but it was understood—I know it was—and the reliance on my silence was so great that not even an injunction was given me !’

‘ Now pray, Doris, don’t excite my curiosity any further if you have no intention of telling me your secret, whatever it may be.’

‘ It is not mine,’ said Doris ; ‘ it is the secret of another person, and mere sophistry my trying to consider myself at liberty to divulge it. But I feel certain of pardon hereafter—pardon from all concerned—yet nothing could overcome my scruples of conscience but a dread of the responsibility of leaving you here for months in ignorance of what so nearly concerns you.’

‘ Then tell me all about it, Doris, and I will promise any amount of secrecy and discretion that may be necessary.’

‘ Your words are well chosen,’ said Doris, placing her hand on her sister’s ; ‘ I require both from you.’

‘ Well, go on,—I promise.’

‘ Promise solemnly,’ continued Doris, ‘ that nothing——nothing will tempt you by *word* or *deed* to betray your knowledge of what I am about to tell you. Remember I warn you beforehand that you will be severely tried, and that no

entreaties by letter will induce me to release you from your engagement.'

For a moment Hilda hesitated—then looked intently at her sister's grave face, thought suddenly of Madame de Bereny, and ended by pledging herself to secrecy as solemnly as was required of her.

'Hilda,' began Doris, 'did you see the wounded officer from the mill standing at the door as we came out of church?'

'No,' she answered, rather surprised at the question; 'the effort to get through the crowd and overtake you and Emmeran prevented me from looking at any one, and I fortunately did not see him.'

'But I did,' said Doris, slowly; 'I saw him distinctly, and was so near him that I could perceive his face flush and his eyes fill with tears as I passed. There was something in the expression of his eyes that attracted me even more than their form and colour, though both were familiar—very familiar to me.'

'Some one we knew at Ulm?' suggested Hilda.

'At Ulm?—yes——' said Doris, completely perplexed by her unconsciousness.

'Not Major Pallersberg, I hope?' said Hilda.
'Mama would be so shocked!'

‘No,’ answered Doris, sadly; ‘but she will indeed be greatly shocked—as much as I was—but scarcely as much—as you will be!’

‘Ha!’ cried Hilda, suddenly alarmed; ‘but no—it is impossible! Oh, Doris,’ she added, with a trembling smile, ‘you have tortured me unpardonably.’

‘No, dear Hilda, I have only prepared you for what you must hear, for what is bad enough, but might be far more—the wounded officer is——’

‘Don’t say it!’ cried Hilda, vehemently; ‘this is some horrible fancy of yours—there may be a likeness,—I will not deny it,—but oh, Doris! you must not expect me to believe that the ghastly invalid at the mill is my noble, handsome Frank!’

Doris slowly moved her head in sad confirmation.

‘It cannot be!’ continued Hilda, with increasing agitation; ‘you are—you must be mistaken. Doris, dear Doris, say that it is so—you forget that I have received letters from him with the Znaim postmark on them.’

‘They were written here,’ said Doris, ‘and sent to Major Pallersberg to be posted there.’

‘How can you know that?’

‘Emmeran told me so as we walked from the mill together about half an hour ago.’

‘Then you have already been there—you and Emmeran have seen him?’

‘Yes.’

‘Spoken to him?’

‘Yes.’

Pale as death, Hilda sat down on the nearest chair. Her doubts were at an end, her hopes that Doris might have been mistaken extinguished; but her grief was at first too acute for utterance, and she remained motionless, pressing her clasped hands on her heart, and breathing audibly, while her sister bent over her, suggesting every consolation that could be offered. ‘I am sure,’ she said, in conclusion, ‘you will at least acknowledge we ought to be thankful that *his* life was spared when tens of thousands fell!’

‘Yes, dear,’ panted Hilda, ‘I am very thankful.’

‘Besides,’ continued Doris, ‘Emmeran assures me that Frank’s complete recovery is now merely a question of time.’

‘And care, Doris, cried Hilda, suddenly rousing herself; ‘and care! And you will release me from my thoughtless promise, and let me take care of him,—won’t you, dearest?’

‘I *cannot*,’ said Doris, firmly, ‘for Frank will not have it so; he said he should doubt any demonstration of affection from you now, or, at least, not value it as he ought, from the suspicion that it was prompted alone by compassion.’

‘How little he knows me!’ cried Hilda, passionately.

‘I told him so,’ continued Doris; ‘but men cannot understand us on such occasions, for even Emmeran said he approved of Frank’s former, and perfectly understood his present, motives for concealment.’

‘I believe,’ said Hilda, ‘from what he once said, when speaking of Colonel Bereny, that I can guess his motives for silence in the first instance, but his reason for not seeing me now is as unjust as it is ungenerous!’

‘It seems so,’ answered Doris; ‘but when you take into consideration your former quarrels and misunderstandings, there is some excuse for him. Besides, it would be unreasonable to expect him to remain altogether unconscious of his great personal advantages, or their value in the opinion of most people, and must therefore forgive him if he attribute at least part of your regard to what the world has forced him to consider one of his chief merits. In short, Hilda, it is evident that

he is unwilling you should see him in a state that he imagines would only cause you to pity him.'

'This is a hard punishment for my pride and jealousy,' said Hilda, 'and proves that my letters have not made him forget either. I can now only hope that he is not so ill as he appears to be—that he does not absolutely require the care and attention he spurns so unkindly.'

'He is greatly emaciated,' answered Doris, 'but I believe his wounds are nearly all healed, and the one on his forehead will scarcely be perceived when the scar is no longer red.'

'And his arm?'

'Is only in a sling; perhaps he cannot yet move it, for the sleeve of his jacket was cut open.'

'But he walks with a crutch, Doris—and I fear—I fear——'

Doris remembered that Frank had raised himself on the sofa with great difficulty, and had required a crutch when he stood up; she turned away saying, 'I don't know—I hope not.'

'Doris,' cried Emmeran, knocking at the door, 'the carriage is packed and our guests are preparing to take leave.'

'I am coming,' she answered, tying on her bonnet and taking up her gloves.

‘One moment!’ cried Hilda. ‘May I tell my mother?’

‘Yes, but only on the same conditions that I have told you—a promise of secrecy, which I know she will keep. Tell her that I have betrayed Frank, not only to prevent you from leaving this house in order to avoid him, but also in the hope that, if circumstances favour you, means may be found to induce him by degrees to lay aside his incognito.’

Doris spoke these last words as they descended the stairs together, and they were soon after in the midst of noisily sympathising friends, who naturally supposed that Doris’s heavy tearful eyelids and Hilda’s colourless lips were caused by their approaching separation.

What occurred during the succeeding quarter of an hour appeared to Hilda like a feverish dream; she heard the murmuring of voices without distinguishing the words; she looked at her mother and wondered how she could smile so brightly and seem so happy, and then she followed the others when they descended the steps that led alike to the miller’s wine-cellars and the gateway opening on the road. She felt herself embraced by Doris and Emmeran, saw the carriage drive off, forced a smile, and tried to appear interested

in what was said during the procrastinated leave-taking of the assembled guests, but no sooner was the gate closed upon the last of them, than she turned round, flew up the stairs to her room, locked the door, and yielded to her painfully restrained grief without control.

Some time elapsed before her mother thought it advisable to follow her and propose a walk in the surrounding vineyards. Hilda opened the door, but turned away her head while saying that she did not feel much inclined to go out. Her mother drew her towards her, looked affectionately at her agitated face and said, with a smile, 'Your anxiety about Doris is unnecessary, dear Hilda. I wish I were as sure of your happiness as I am of hers.'

'Of that, said Hilda, 'there is no chance. My happiness was lost in the cathedral at Ulm; and I now know but too well that Frank not only never cared for *me*, but even doubts *my* affection for *him*.'

'Have you heard from him again?' asked her mother, quickly.

'No, but I have heard of him; he does not want or wish to see me.'

'Jealous again, Hilda!' said her mother, sitting down with a look of resignation. 'Come then,

tell me all about it, and as Doris is no longer here, I must take her place, and laugh at or scold you as the case may be.'

'Rather say,' answered Hilda, seating herself on a footstool, and placing her arm and head on her mother's knee, 'rather say you will take her place and console me—if you can.'

'I shall try to do so,' said her mother, with a quiet smile; 'and now tell me what you have heard of him!'

But Hilda, in her turn, felt the difficulty of communicating ill-tidings to a person unprepared to hear them, and, when urged to speak, answered hesitatingly, 'I ought to try to tell you, as Doris told me——'

'Doris?' repeated her mother, surprised.

'Yes, but first of all I must obtain a promise of secrecy from you.'

The promise was given without a moment's hesitation, and then Hilda suddenly raised her head, and in a few passionate sentences explained all.

CHAPTER XIX.

NONE SO BLIND AS THOSE WHO WILL NOT SEE.

HILDA'S grief subsided by degrees into resignation. She spoke constantly of Frank, and found her mother not only, a patient and indulgent listener, but even inclined to join her in any feasible plan likely to induce him to betray himself. For a whole week he kept more out of sight than ever, the most sultry weather no longer tempting him to seek shade beneath the chesnut-trees, or the mildest evenings inducing him, as had been his wont, to sit at the door of the mill until the darkness permitted him to limp unseen in the sheltered walks of the vineyard. Tired, however, of the confinement, he at length resolved to undertake some short excursions in the neighbourhood, and, as few can be made otherwise than on foot or on horseback, he first used the miller's little carriage to visit Lana and the Badl, and then hired one of his horses to ride to the castle of Tirol; it was seeing this animal undergoing

very unusual ablutions that induced Hilda to make inquiries as to the cause.

‘The colonel, ma’am, feels himself so much better, that he is going to ride to Tirol.’

‘But is that horse safe?’ she asked, with an anxious glance towards the forefeet, which seemed somewhat impaired by heavy draught.

‘Lord bless you, ma’am! the colonel’s servant, as was here before you came, told us his master could ride any ’oss.’

‘I have no doubt of that,’ said Hilda, ‘but with a wounded arm and—and the leg——’

‘You may be right there,’ said the man, looking up; ‘that leg is less than no use to him, and he knows it too, for he told me to bring a chair and a man to help him to mount, and to be sure to choose a time when no one was likely to see him.’

‘Are you—or is the man you spoke of going with him?’ asked Hilda.

‘No, ma’am; I offered, but he wouldn’t hear of such a thing!’

‘And,’ said Hilda, ‘if the horse make a false step on those paved roads, and he has not strength to pull him up, what will be the consequence?’

‘Bad enough, ma’am; but when I recommended him to look sharp, especially coming down hill,

he said his right arm was still fit for service, and I needn't have no fears either for him or for the 'oss, ma'am.'

Hilda went immediately to her mother and informed her of Frank's intention, adding a wish to follow him to the castle of Tirol, if it could be done without exciting his suspicions.

'Let us take chance for that,' answered her mother, 'and send at once for horses, but, as neither they nor the roads are likely to tempt us to go out of a walk, I propose that we engage peasants to lead them. We must not set out for at least half an hour after Frank, and can take Hans with us in case we should return late.'

'Is there no danger of his recognizing Frank?' asked Hilda.

'I think not; but what matter if he do? I could almost wish that Janet had not gone away with Doris; she went so often to the mill, that a meeting with Frank in the end would have been certain, and equally certain that she would have known him, and would neither have made a promise of secrecy nor considered herself bound to be silent under such circumstances. The question now is—can you see Frank with the necessary composure, and if I am able to persuade

him that we do not recognize him, can you speak to him as a stranger?’

‘I will try,’ said Hilda; ‘I *must* try, as there is no alternative between avoiding him altogether or keeping my promise to Doris.’

Before they set out on their excursion, Hilda received a letter from Frank, in which he informed her that he had at last obtained the object of his ambition—a Theresian Cross—was to be made Baron, and, if she approved, would take the name of More von Garvagh.’

‘These honours,’ observed her mother, ‘have probably already more than consoled him for his wounds; and I am convinced, if it were not for this eccentric concealment from you, he would be perfectly happy.’

‘And so should I,’ answered Hilda; ‘but you seem to oversee the unkindness of his requiring concealment from me alone! Now I should like to know,’ she added, thoughtfully, ‘whether or not Madame de Bereny knew all this when she was here last week? Frank’s letter bears the date of that very day, and he may have seen her—in fact he may have often seen her before we came to Meran.’

‘I don’t think he did,’ interposed her mother, ‘for by all accounts he was too ill to go out when

he first came here, and if she had even been at the mill, the family there would have spoken of it.'

'I hope you are right,' said Hilda, 'for, without being supposed jealous, I think I may say it would have been very hard if he had consented to see her and refused to see me! Do you think I ought to comply with her request, and let her know what he has written? I fear a note or message will bring her here again.'

'Let her come,' replied her mother, 'for if we could manage to make her meet Frank, her recognition of him would save us a great deal of painful acting.'

'What a pity we did not think of this plan before!' said Hilda. 'It would have been so easy to have induced her to go to Tirol with us to-day.'

'No, Hilda! Let us first see him alone, and put our self-possession to the proof without witnesses.'

'It will be a hard trial,' said Hilda, 'and I can only hope that circumstances will favour us.'

An hour later they were on the road to the village and castle of Tirol, mounted on horses such as guides generally place at the service of strangers—quiet animals, whose only pace seems an eager walk that is generally supposed to be

warranted safe. Hilda did not think it necessary to consider herself on horseback at all—she placed the reins in the hand of her guide and, heedless or unconscious of the beautiful scenery around her, indulged in a long retrospect, beginning at the early winter morning on which she had seen her cousin Frank as he stamped his feet on the snow-covered ground of the Chapel-island and laughingly shook the water of the lake from his dripping clothes, and ending with the spectral figure of her husband standing beneath the tree in the orchard ten days previously. It was a retrospect of nine years; but how short the time appeared! A few important circumstances, chiefly those recorded in these volumes, had made an indelible impression on her mind, but all the rest was a mere consciousness of having lived more or less contentedly at Westenried, Ulm, and Innsbruck. The current of her thoughts was undisturbed until she reached the tunnel conducting to the castle, but it was not the deep bed of the mountain stream nor the steep high sand-bank on which the remains of the castle stood that then attracted her attention,—it was the miller's horse held by a little boy, who allowed him to nibble at pleasure the herbs that grew thick and green up to the very threshold of the castle.

As Hilda and her mother dismounted, they were rather surprised to perceive a number of peasants standing in groups about the entrance; several others were in the building itself, and some followed them to the room in which they thought it probable they should find Frank. Nor were they disappointed, for on entering they instantly perceived him close to one of the windows, with his wounded leg stretched at full length on a row of chairs, and completely engaged in explaining to some sturdy-looking peasant riflemen the necessity of laying down their arms and resigning themselves to a peace that was now inevitable. He was intimating his intention of going to see Hofer as soon as he could venture on so long a ride when his eyes fell on Hilda and her mother, and it was astonishing the self-possession with which he continued to speak while carefully drawing the black bandage over the greater part of his face.

There was nothing in the room to tempt strangers to visit it, excepting the magnificent view from the windows, and though Hilda hesitated, her mother instantly advanced to the one of which Frank had obtained possession, and, availing herself of the excuse that the others were occupied, requested permission to look out of it.

Frank instantly made an effort to move the chairs.

‘Pray, don’t disturb yourself,’ she said; ‘I can pass quite easily. Hilda, come here. The weather is so clear that we can follow the windings of the Adige the whole length of the valley, and see distinctly the towers of the castle of Eppan. How beautiful!’

‘Beautiful indeed!’ murmured Frank, his eyes fixed upon Hilda, as she stood beside her mother in a sort of forced rigid composure that gave her unusually pale features a statue-like expression.

Her mother continued to speak, and was soon able to turn towards Frank and half-smile at his exaggerated disguise, but Hilda’s stolen glance had a different effect; her limbs trembled, her eyes grew dim, a cold moisture overspread her brow, and, after a few ineffectual efforts to conceal her increasing weakness, she put her arm within her mother’s, and, leaning heavily upon it, whispered, ‘Let us go—I cannot—stay here—any longer.’

Frank, who had watched her increasing pallor with great uneasiness, placed his hand on the back of the nearest chair, and raised himself suddenly on his feet. He could not have chosen a better means to revive her, for the movement

made it evident that the pieces of wood and leather straps which she had supposed to be the substitute for a lost limb were in fact but the supports of a wounded leg, that seemed in no way curtailed of its fair proportions. She did not trust herself to look at him, but, with eyes bent on the ground, walked slowly out of the room.

‘I cannot do it!’ she exclaimed, vehemently, as they sat under a tree near the castle. ‘All my former self-possession in Frank’s presence is gone, and in order to keep my word to Doris I must carefully avoid meeting him again. Oh, why did she tell me? Of what use is my knowing that he is here if I must continue under such restraint?’

‘Very true,’ answered her mother; ‘it was unlike Doris betraying him in the first instance, and still more unlike her not having courage to brave his displeasure and leave you at liberty to act as you think best on so momentous an occasion.’

‘I am sure she meant well,’ began Hilda.

‘Of that there can be no doubt,’ said her mother; ‘she was evidently tempted to make this injudicious disclosure by a strong desire to promote a reconciliation between you. But there is no use in now talking of her error in judgment, or his provoking eccentricity. Let us believe in her good intentions, and leave him to choose his

own time for putting aside his incognito ; we can at least, while apparently avoiding him, have the satisfaction of watching his progressive recovery.'

And Frank's recovery did in fact from that time forward progress rapidly ; he made almost daily excursions, and though Hilda resolutely refrained from asking in what direction he was likely to ride, the miller or some member of his family regularly informed her of his plans for the day.

'I have just heard of Frank's intention to ride to Fragsburg,' she observed, one morning, as she entered her mother's room, 'and the miller proposed getting horses for us in case we wished to go there also.'

'You refused, of course ?'

'Yes ; I said the weather was too warm, and then he told me, very significantly, that he suspected the colonel would be disappointed.'

'What did he mean by that ?'

'He evidently imagines that Frank is tired of being alone, and kindly wishes to procure him some acquaintances. At all events, it seems he has asked the miller a great many questions about us, and wondered why I did not play the harp and sing as I used to do.'

‘And I,’ said her mother, ‘I wonder what our friend the miller answered?’

‘Very probably,’ suggested Hilda, ‘he told him I was inconsolable for the loss of my sister, for he advised me not to take on so about her, as a marriage was not a misfortune in a family, but rather the contrary, when it was agreeable to all parties, and the young man faithful for nine long years, as he had heard from Mrs. Janet.’

‘It seems Janet was loquacious,’ observed her mother.

‘She always was, and always will be,’ answered Hilda; ‘and while she was here Frank obtained information enough about us without the trouble of questioning any one.’

‘Then you do not think he is inclined to make an advance?’ said her mother. ‘You do not imagine he wishes to meet us again?’

‘No,’ replied Hilda; ‘I think the Fragsburg proposal was merely a sociable inspiration of “our miller” for “his colonel.”’

‘You may be right,’ observed her mother, thoughtfully, ‘but if you could see Frank with more composure than at Tirol Castle, I think a sufficient time has intervened to admit of another advance on our part being made without its exciting a shadow of suspicion in his mind.’

‘Then let us go!’ cried Hilda, evidently delighted at the proposal. ‘I shall be glad to see him again on any terms.’

Not long after, Frank, with very little assistance, mounted the miller’s horse and rode from the mill. ‘How quickly he is recovering!’ observed Hilda, who had been watching him through the foliage of a trellised vine; ‘all the wooden supports and leather straps have been taken from his leg, and he seems scarcely at all lame now!’

‘Well, my dear, did not Doris mention in her letter that he had written a very good account of himself, and hoped to throw aside his crutch in a day or two?’

‘Perhaps,’ said Hilda, ‘he has already been some time without it.’

‘Not at all improbable; and if we walk down to the mill while waiting for the horses, we shall be sure to hear everything about him that can interest us.’

And so it proved. They were immediately informed that the colonel had received a letter, brought by a man who was supposed to be a messenger from the Archduke John, if not from the Emperor Franz himself, and after reading this letter, and speaking to the man that brought it, the colonel had become so impatient about

his recovery, that he had first sent into Meran to consult his doctor there, and afterwards despatched an express for the famous surgeon at Botzen; both had been with him the previous day, and after a long consultation had declared that his leg was so nearly well again, that he might now go wherever he pleased, provided he rested at night and did not walk too much for the next month or six weeks. As soon as the surgeons left him he had told the miller that he intended in a day or two to undertake a longer excursion than he had yet attempted, but as he proposed setting off early in the morning there was nothing to prevent his returning at night, although the days were unfortunately very short just then.

‘Very short, indeed,’ said Hilda, ‘and therefore I think the sooner we set out now the better.’

CHAPTER XX.

NOW OR NEVER!

THE road to Fragsburg passes through the best land about Meran; on each side of it there are fields of wheat and corn, belonging to the rich peasants who reside on the mountain; and after wandering for some weeks through endless vineyards, the change to less romantic scenery is more welcome than people generally are willing to acknowledge.

The old fortress of Fragsburg is situated on an elevated rocky projection commanding the country beneath, but having reached the summit one is surprised to find it part of a highly cultivated plain of considerable extent, beyond which the mountain rises again a rugged mass of wood and rocks, and among these there is a waterfall that is not only an object of interest to tourists, but the termination of every Fragsburg excursion undertaken by the inhabitants of Meran.

With the old castle itself, its square tower and

marble-pillared veranda, its wainscotted rooms, and wonderful stoves, we have no concern, for at the entrance to the dilapidated court Hilda saw the miller's horse, and soon ascertained that Frank had gone to the waterfall, and intended to rest there for an hour or two. Her mother urged her to follow him, proposing herself to visit the family at the castle, with whom she was slightly acquainted; and, after some hesitation, Hilda consented, declaring however that she could not, and would not, make any attempt to induce Frank to speak to her.

She knew the way well, and did not pause until she reached the end of the fields and commenced a descent to the ravine, into which the water fell in cascades of various heights. Then she began to feel the difficulties of her situation in full force, and to doubt her power of keeping her promise to her sister as she ought. She sat down on the trunk of a felled tree, hoping by a short delay to fortify herself for a meeting that certainly had the most satisfactory appearance of chance, and could raise no suspicions in his mind; but just as she clasped her hands round her knees, and began to conjecture what he was likely to do or think when he saw her, she discovered that he was actually at no great distance from her,

standing on the edge of a small plateau of grass, whence a view of the waterfall could be obtained without much exertion.

How secure from her observation he must have thought himself as he leaned on his mountain staff, his hat on the ground, and the black bandage no longer concealing his forehead! Hilda also perceived at a glance that his hair had been cut, and the greater part of his wild beard removed, so that he now looked so like himself that an attempt to ignore him would be perfectly absurd. This was a dilemma for which she was quite unprepared, and she started from her seat with such impetuosity that some chips and stones loosely attached to the bark of the tree rolled downwards, and instantly attracted Frank's attention. When he looked up she stood for a moment still as a statue; then, as the thought flashed through her mind that flight would betray consciousness, she sprang forward, and choosing a more precipitous path than the one near which he stood, never once stopped until she reached the bottom of the ravine, and found herself close to the small pool formed by the waterfall before it found an outlet through the rocks and became a rivulet.

Breathless and agitated she leaned against the

nearest tree, and began to repent the course she had taken. 'What was the use of my coming here?' she thought, looking round her; 'I cannot remain beside this noisy waterfall for two hours, and must therefore make up my mind to pass him again——perhaps, however, he will have tied on the black handkerchief, or put on his hat, or he may turn away, or,—or have gone away——but no,—I hope not, as I believe I could pass him now with tolerable composure.'

And while so thinking, Hilda began a deliberate ascent, pausing occasionally as if to admire the view, but in fact to reconnoitre the ground around her, and if possible see Frank without being seen by him. She forgot the advantage of his position above her, and was for some time unconscious that she was watched; but even when aware of it she continued her ascent, not even venturing on the slightest deviation from the beaten path that she knew would bring her quite close to him.

Great, however, was the relief afforded by a protruding rock, behind which she could hide herself for a short time; but no sooner did she feel the certainty of being unobserved than her courage failed, and, utterly disheartened, she pressed her burning forehead against the cold stone,

raised her clasped hands above her head, and wept with the noiseless agony of forcibly restrained grief; her whole frame shook with sobs scarcely louder than sighs, and her sorrow was so absorbing that she was quite unconscious of the sound of approaching footsteps, though they were accompanied by the loud striking of a staff on the ground. Her name even was pronounced twice by Frank before she turned round and saw him standing almost beside her.

Pale as death, and scarcely less agitated than herself, he faltered, 'Doris has written to me, Hilda, and I now know that further concealment would be folly.'

'It would be cruel, Frank,' she answered, smiling through her tears: when, forgetful of all his resolutions, he embraced her passionately. 'It would be cruel, and indeed I did not deserve that you should doubt my affection so ungenerously!'

Whatever doubts he may still have entertained were, it may be conjectured, removed in a very satisfactory manner; it is rather to be feared that Hilda's impulsive nature induced her to make a fuller confession of her love, and greater profession of penitence, than was necessary. 'What actually was said no one ever ascertained; but

Frank never afterwards seemed in the least to distrust any demonstration of affection on her part, or for a moment to attribute it to compassion,—and perhaps the greatest, and at the same time first effort on his part to prove this was, when the short afternoon began to draw to a close, he accepted her arm, and leaned upon it while ascending the steep path that took them out of the ravine.

The ride back to Meran and the miller's house was very pleasant,—the evening spent together in perfectly unreserved conversation, singularly cheerful. Frank lingered on from hour to hour, until at length his aunt, after having repeatedly fallen asleep, stood up and quietly wished him good night.

‘I understand the hint,’ he said, laughing; ‘but it is very hard to be dismissed in this way when I know I shall not see you all day to-morrow!’

‘Why not?’ asked Hilda.

‘Because I must go to the Valley of Passeyer to speak to Andrew Hofer,—he is surrounded by people trying to induce him to head another insurrection, and I hope to induce him to lay down his arms and secure his and their personal safety while it is yet time. You see this is an affair

that will admit of no procrastination, and I intend to be on the road to the "Sands" at eight o'clock to-morrow morning. Hilda,' he added, with difficulty suppressing a smile, 'you once said you would visit Hofer—that you wished to see the little inn on the Sands——'

'Nothing I should like better,' she answered quickly; 'and if you will take me with you to-morrow, I promise to be ready at any hour you please.'

'You had better set off early,' interposed her mother, 'or else you will not be able to return before it is dark.'

'Oh, we shall have plenty of time!' cried Frank, gaily. 'It will be altogether a delightful excursion, and I don't so much mind going to the mill now that I know I may return to you so soon again. Nevertheless, I wish it were morning!'

* * * *

A few hours later they were once more assembled, and, after a hasty breakfast, descended to the road.

'Good-bye, dear mother!' said Hilda, springing on her horse, 'we shall come back early that you may not have time to be uneasy about us——and

while you are alone to-day you can write a long, long letter to Doris and tell her——’

‘Tell her,’ interposed Frank, ‘that her last expedient for the promotion of our happiness has been completely successful, and that instead of reproaching, I shall thank her for it when we meet.’

The horses moved slowly on, Hilda looked back smiling brightly, and her mother heard her exclaim, ‘What a charming ride we shall have!—I never felt so happy in all my life.’

‘Or I either,’ answered Frank; and though immediately afterwards they were out of sight, the sound of their mirthful voices as they slowly descended the hill on the paved road through the vineyards, was still heard by the profoundly inquisitive and much amazed inhabitants of the mill.

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As evening approached, a peasant from the Valley of Passeyer was seen walking up to the miller’s house; he was the bearer of a note from Hilda containing the following lines:—

‘Dear Mother,—Frank says that returning to Meran to-night would fatigue him dreadfully, so

of course we must not think of attempting it; but you need not be uneasy, as the ride here appears not to have been in the least too long for him. I am sorry to say that all his efforts to persuade Hofer to accept the offered amnesty, and to refuse to command the projected continuation of the insurrection, have been fruitless. He first answered evasively, until the Archduke's name was used, and Frank urged more strongly, when he at length exclaimed: 'I would comply with your request if it were in my power; but if I moved one step from my house with such intentions my own people would shoot me on the spot!'

The next day brought another letter from Hilda, containing a communication for which her mother seemed wonderfully well prepared. She smiled as she read:

'We have eloped, dear mother, and when this reaches you we shall be riding over the Jaufen on our way to Innsbruck,—there we shall remain a few days in the hope that you will send us some clothes, so that we may be able to go on to Ulm and Westenried. I wish you could have heard dear old Hofer yesterday evening admonishing us to love one another and live in peace. Frank

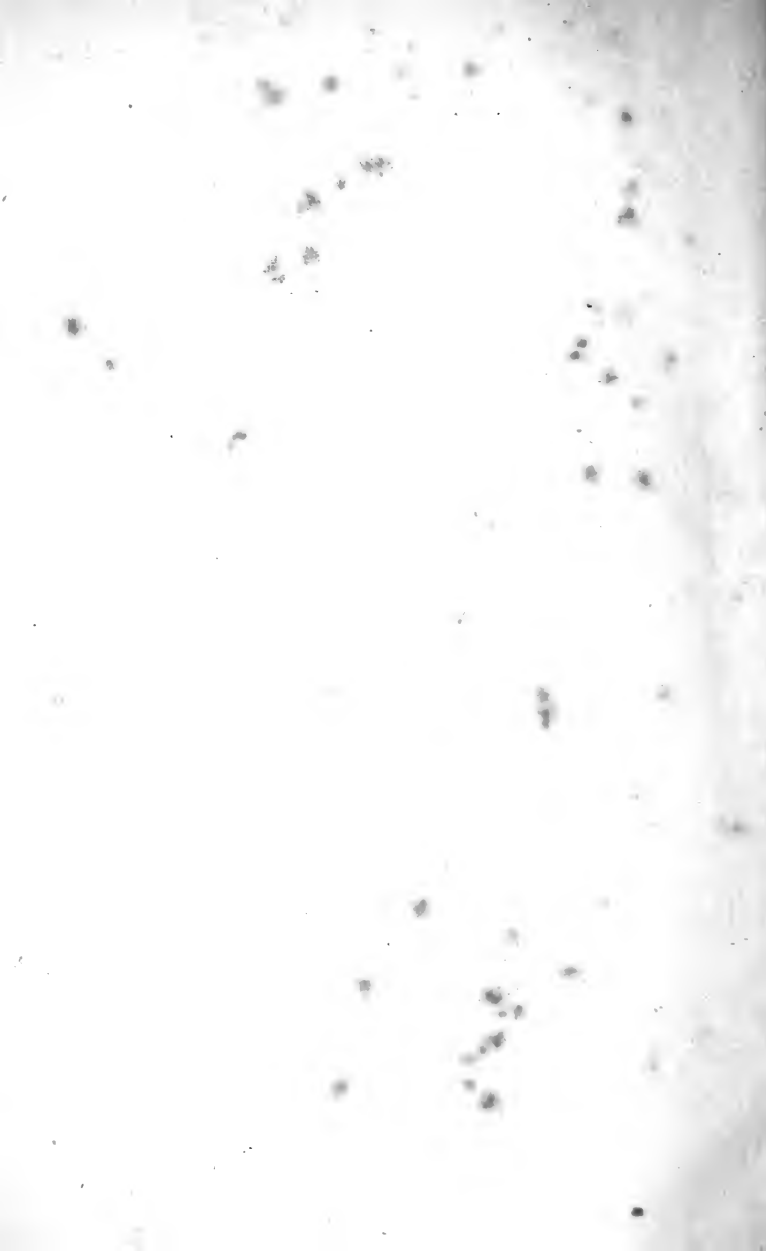
* Hofer's own words.

knows so well his great predilection for the adjustment of conjugal quarrels, that he listened with the most exemplary patience, and delighted Hofer by observing that inasmuch as Napoleon at Ulm had been indirectly the cause of our separation, so had Andrew Hofer at Innsbruck promoted our reconciliation: he ended with the assurance that we were now the happiest and most attached couple in the world, and you shall have proof that this assertion is true, dear mother, when we return to you a few weeks hence with Doris and Emmeran, for Frank's perfectly satisfactory explanations on every subject have made it impossible for us ever again to be at odds.'

THE END.













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